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THE HOLY GRAIL

TENNYSON



EDITED BY

SOPHIE JEWETT



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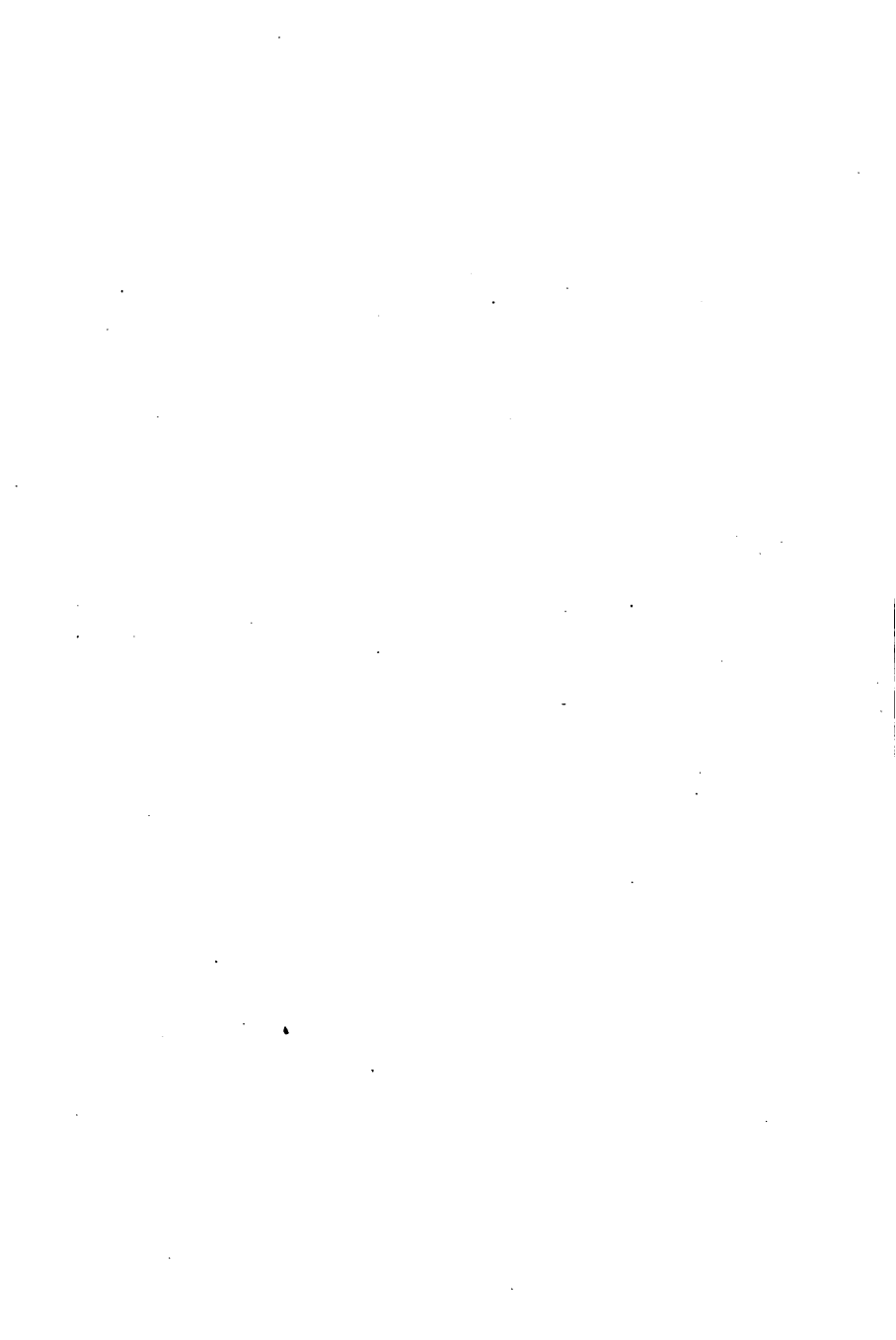
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SIR GALAHAD.

From the painting by G. F. Watts.

The Silver Series of English and American Classics

TENNYSON

THE HOLY GRAIL

EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

SOPHIE JEWETT

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
WELLESLEY COLLEGE



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SIR GALAHAD.

My good blade carves the casques of men,
My tough lance thrusteth sure,
My strength is as the strength of ten,
Because my heart is pure.
The shattering trumpet shrilleth high,
The hard brands shiver on the steel,
The splinter'd spear-shafts crack and fly,
The horse and rider reel :
They reel, they roll in clanging lists,
And when the tide of combat stands,
Perfume and flowers fall in showers,
That lightly rain from ladies' hands.

How sweet are looks that ladies bend
On whom their favours fall !
For them I battle till the end,
To save from shame and thrall :
But all my heart is drawn above,
My knees are bowed in crypt and shrine,
I never felt the kiss of love,
Nor maiden's hand in mine.
More bounteous aspects on me beam,
Me mightier transports move and thrill ;

So keep I fair thro' faith and prayer
A virgin heart in work and will.

When down the stormy crescent goes,
A light before me swims,
Between dark stems the forest glows,
I hear a noise of hymns:
Then by some secret shrine I ride;
I hear a voice, but none are there;
The stalls are void, the doors are wide,
The tapers burning fair.
Fair gleams the snowy altar-cloth,
The silver vessels sparkle clean,
The shrill bell rings, the censer swings,
And solemn chaunts resound between.

Sometimes on lonely mountain-meres
I find a magic bark;
I leap on board: no helmsman steers:
I float till all is dark.
A gentle sound, an awful light!
Three angels bear the Holy Grail.
With folded feet, in stoles of white,
On sleeping wings they sail.
Oh, blessed vision! Blood of God!
My spirit beats her mortal bars,
As down dark tides the glory slides,
And, star-like, mingles with the stars.

When on my goodly charger borne
Thro' dreaming towns I go,

The cock crows ere the Christmas morn,
The streets are dumb with snow.
The tempest crackles on the leads,
And, ringing, springs from brand and mail ;
But o'er the dark a glory spreads,
And gilds the driving hail.
I leave the plain, I climb the height ;
No branchy thicket shelter yields ;
But blessed forms in whistling storms
Fly o'er waste fens and windy fields.

A maiden knight — to me is given
Such hope, I know not fear ;
I yearn to breathe the airs of heaven
That often meet me here.
I muse on joy that will not cease,
Pure spaces clothed in living beams,
Pure lilies of eternal peace,
Whose odours haunt my dreams ;
And stricken by an angel's hand,
This mortal armour that I wear,
This weight and size, this heart and eyes,
Are touch'd and turn'd to finest air.

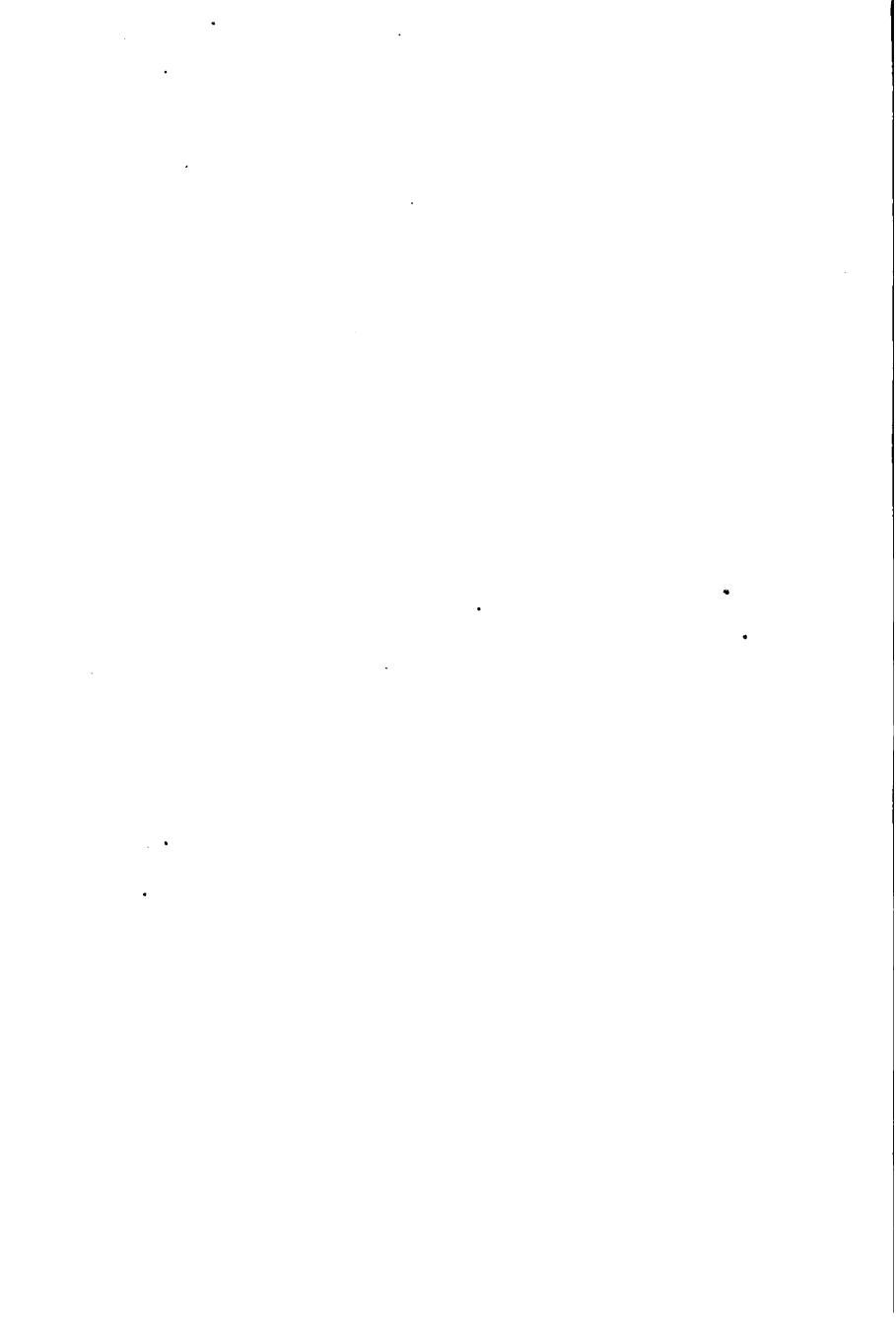
The clouds are broken in the sky,
And thro' the mountain-walls
A rolling organ-harmony
Swells up, and shakes and falls.
Then move the trees, the copses nod,
Wings flutter, voices hover clear :

“O just and faithful knight of God,
Ride on ! the prize is near !”
So pass I hostel, hall, and grange ;
By bridge and ford, by park and pale
All-arm'd I ride, whate'er betide,
Until I find the Holy Grail.

TENNYSON. Published in 1842.

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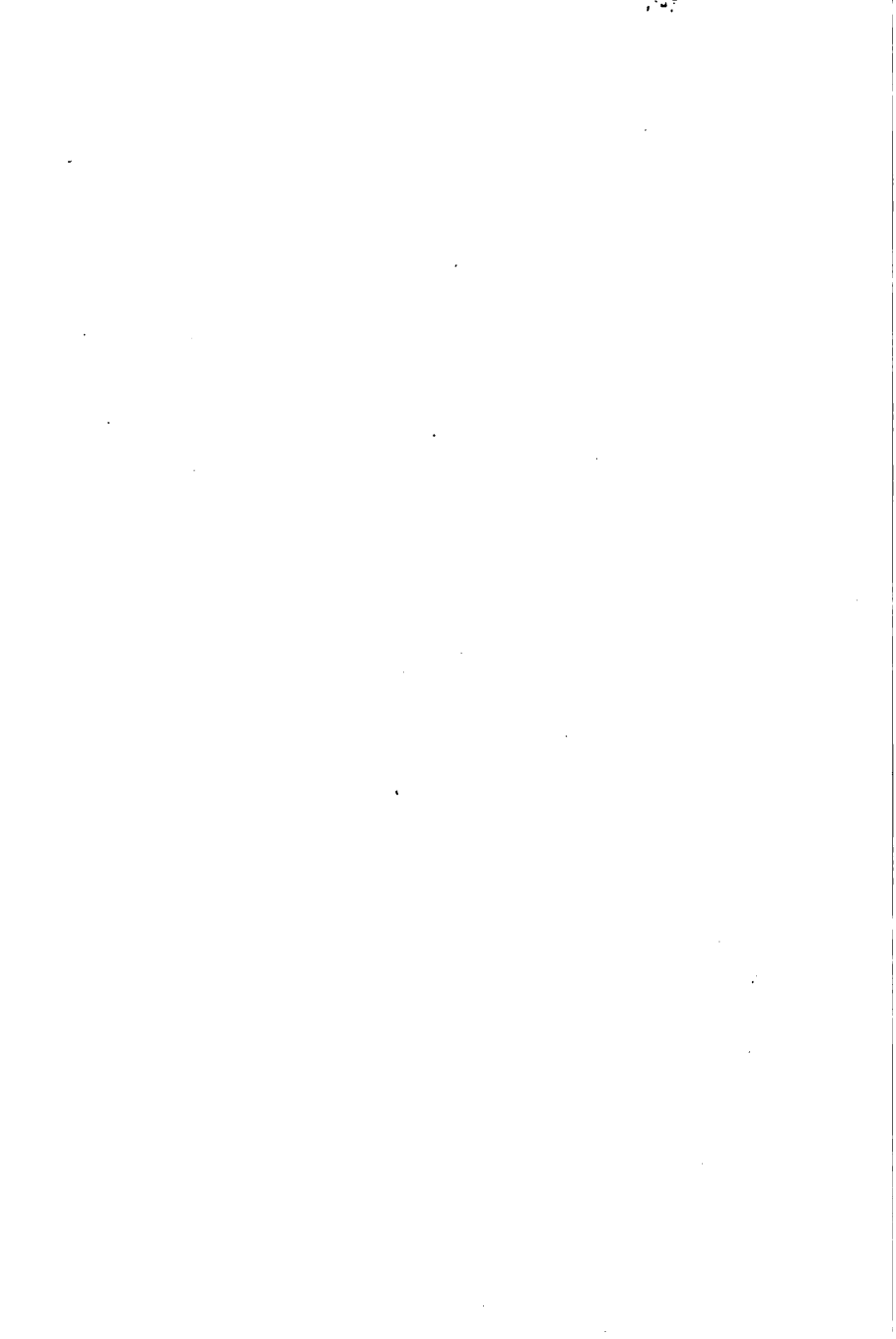
PREFACE.

IN this edition of *The Holy Grail* the purposes of the editor have been chiefly two: to make the explanatory notes as few and as clear as possible, and to interest the student in the beauty of that world of old legends, to which English poets, from Spenser to Tennyson, have turned for subject and for inspiration. Not all the Arthurian romances are easily accessible; for that reason quotations are given at some length, but it is hoped that the bibliography may be useful to those who wish to purchase books. Such beautiful and inexpensive volumes as the Temple Classics edition of the *Morte Darthur*, and *The High History of the Holy Grail*, Mr. Newell's *King Arthur and the Table Round*, and Miss Weston's translations, are within the reach of every school or town library.

The editor has tried to avoid much comment upon the imaginative and the technical beauties of the text, believing that such things are better left for the student to discover for himself, or, failing that, for the teacher to suggest in the class room. For like reasons, definitions of unusual words are not given when they are to be found in any good dictionary.

The editor's many obligations to students of Tennyson's poetry and to students of Arthurian romance are gratefully acknowledged.

APRIL 20, 1901.



INTRODUCTION.



I. THE VARIOUS VERSIONS OF THE LEGEND.

THE legend of the Holy Grail is the most beautiful of mediæval stories. It appears in many and widely differing forms. It was told and retold in different countries and in different centuries, sometimes by true poets, sometimes by mere imitators and chroniclers. In its various forms are embodied the highest mediæval ideals of conduct and of faith. In the nineteenth century the ancient legend has not lost its charm. One version suggested Wagner's great opera *Parsifal*, and another Tennyson's idyll *The Holy Grail*.

A difficult and probably impossible task of modern scholarship is the classification of the Grail legends according to date, authorship, and interrelation. It is almost certainly true that no research will ever accurately determine the relative age of existing romances, much less the sequence of the original stories. Too many links in the chain are broken, and too many are lost.

The student interested in this study is referred to the Bibliography (VIII. below), and especially to Mr. Nutt's *Studies in the Legend of the Holy Grail* and to Mr. Newell's articles in the *Journal of American Folklore*.

1. THE THREE GROUPS OF MEDIÆVAL STORIES.

The most important legends of the Holy Grail may be divided into three groups:—

- A. Those which tell the story of Perceval and the castle of the Grail.
- B. Those which give the early history of the Holy Grail and of Joseph of Arimathæa.
- C. Those which tell of the quest of the Holy Grail by the knights of Arthur's court.

The story of Perceval is almost certainly older than the other two; and the early history of the Grail may be of later invention than the story of Galahad and the quest.

The earliest known version of the story of Perceval is the poem by Chrestien de Troyes, a French poet of the twelfth century. The next is a poem by Wolfram von Eschenbach, a German poet of the thirteenth century.¹

In the legend of Perceval the Grail is a wonderful cup² which has come from heaven. It is kept in a magic castle, Monsalvat, and is guarded by a Grail king and a group of attendant Grail knights and Grail maidens. The Grail provides for its guardians marvelous feasts served without hands. The reigning Grail King of the story lies wounded, and daily the Holy Grail and a bleeding lance are borne before him; but he may not be healed until the best knight of the world shall come and shall ask the meaning of the Grail and who are served by it. Perceval, the chosen knight, on his first coming neglects to ask the question,

¹ Cf. App. III.

² In Wolfram's poem it is a jewel.

and because of this failure he endures many years of sorrow and vain search before he again finds the Grail castle; and the wounded king waits all these years in disappointment and pain. In this first group of legends the Grail and the Bleeding Lance have nothing to do with the story of the death of Christ.

The stories of the second group tell how, after the Crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathæa brought into Britain the cup from which Jesus drank the wine of the Last Supper, and, in the cup, the blood that fell from His wounds. In this legend the bleeding lance becomes the spear that pierced the side of Jesus. The heroes of this story are Joseph of Arimathæa and his son Josephes, who bring Christianity to Britain.

In the third group of legends the interest centers in the Grail itself, the cup of the Last Supper, brought into Britain by Joseph of Arimathæa. This cup has been mysteriously lost, yet there are stories of its passing sometimes before saintly eyes. When Galahad, the maiden knight, comes to Arthur's court, a swift, strange light passes through the great hall, and all are fed by the Grail, which, however, none may see, because it is covered. Then the knights of the Round Table swear that they will travel the world over till they have seen the Sangreal. The most significant differences between this version and the earlier ones are, first, that Galahad, the youthful knight who has never loved a woman, but is vowed to the service of the Grail alone, takes the place of Perceval; and, second, that many knights instead of one or two take part in the search.

The author of *The Quest of the Holy Grail*¹ is a man to whom the ascetic ideal of life represents the highest type of holiness. Around each of the knights of King Arthur's court clusters a group of adventures, secular and sometimes sinful, but Galahad, whose character this author seems to have created, walks among the others, and is not of them, and they know as they look upon him that he is chosen to achieve the quest of the Sangreal.

A. *The Perceval Romances.*

"Sir Percival,
Whom Arthur and his Knighthood call'd The Pure."

— *Holy Grail*, l. 2.

In the mediæval stories the earlier heroes of the Grail are Gawain² and Perceval, and Perceval is chief.

The most important of the Perceval romances³ are the old French poem *Perceval le Gallois ou le Conte du Graal*,⁴ by Chrestien de Troyes and his followers, and the old German poem *Parzival*⁵ by Wolfram von Eschenbach. Wolfram knows and sometimes follows Chrestien's poem, but it is likely that he had also another French source.⁶

Nothing in mediæval literature is prettier than the story of the childhood of Perceval, as told in these two old poems. It recalls the wood-bred knight of Greek legend. Like Paris with the shepherds on Mount Ida, like Jason with Chiron the centaur, Perceval knows nothing of his noble birth and heritage.

¹ Newell, Vol. II. p. 261.

² See App. I.

³ For the Perceval romances, see VIII. A. 1, 3, 6, 7, below.

⁴ VIII. A. 1.

⁵ VIII. A. 6.

⁶ See Nutt, pp. 261-263.

The child's father is slain in battle, and his mother hides away with her baby in the forest, that he may never hear of knights and tourneys, kings and courts, lest he, too, come to bear arms and meet death as his father has done.¹ He wanders alone in the forest; but his mother warns him to fly back to her, if he shall see men covered with iron, for they are devils. So the boy goes clad in rustic dress, armed only with bow and arrows. He has never seen knight nor steed in armor, nor has he heard of the great deeds of King Arthur's court.

The story of Perceval's first meeting with armed knights is thus told: "When trees bloom, thickets leaf, and fields are green; when birds sing sweetly at morn and all things flame with joy, the son of the Widowed Dame of the Vast Solitary Forest rose and saddled his hunter, taking three of his darts. . . . As he entered the wood, his heart bounded within him, for the sake of the pleasant season and the songs of the merry birds: because of the sweetness of the sovereign time, he gave his hunter the rein, and left him free to feed on the fresh sprouting grass. While he, who had skill to throw the darts he bore, roved and cast them now behind and now before, now alow and now aloft, until approached five knights, armed in all their array. Their weapons made a loud noise, as fast as they rode, for the oaks hurtled against their arms, their mail tinkled, and their lances clashed upon their shields. The boy,² who heard them but could not see, wondered and cried: 'By my soul! my mother, my lady, who telleth me true, saith

¹ *Le Conte del Graal*, ed. Potvin, Vol. II. p. 35, ll. 945-950.

² Mr. Newell translates "varlet."

that devils are wilder than aught in the world: she saith so to make me cross myself, that I may be safe from them: but I will not, no; instead, I will strike the strongest with one of these darts, so that he will not dare come near me, nor any of his mates, I trow!

“Thus to himself said the boy; but when the knights issued from the wood, with their beautiful shields and shining helms, such as never before had he seen, and he beheld green and vermilion, gold and azure and silver gleam in the sun, he wondered and cried: ‘Ha, Lord God, mercy! These are angels I see! I did wrong to call them devils: my mother, who fableth not, saith that naught is so fair as angels, save God who is more beautiful than all: here is one so fair that the others own not a tenth of his beauty; my mother saith that one ought to believe in God, bow the knee and adore Him; Him will I worship, and the rest who are with Him.’”¹ So the boy fell on his knees, and the knights thought him afraid; but he demanded who they might be? and would know the name and use of every weapon; and at last he learned that they were knights, not angels, and that a great king named Arthur had made them knights. Perceval went back to his mother and, in spite of her tears, would ride away to Carlisle “to the king who maketh knights.”

We cannot follow Perceval through his many adventures. In his peasant dress he rides into King Arthur's hall and awkwardly knocks off the king's hat. He slays a Red Knight and will wear his armor, but he does not know

¹Newell, *King Arthur*, Vol. II. pp. 3-9. Potvin, Vol. II. pp. 45-57, ll. 1283-1689.

how to undo it till he is taught. He comes to a castle where an old knight instructs him in the use of arms, and that most necessary of knightly exercises, horsemanship: "And the youth began to carry lance and shield, as if his days had been spent in quest of strife and adventure; for it came to him naturally; and when Nature teacheth, and the heart is set on a thing, nothing cometh hard."¹

The old knight also teaches the youth maxims of chivalry, and, especially, bids him ask fewer questions. Finally he makes him knight, and sends him forth to return to his mother. Perceval rescues a fair lady, Blanchefleur, from her enemies. He loves her, but leaves her to go on his search for his mother.

He never finds his mother, and until ten years later he does not know of her death. He comes instead to the castle of the Fisher King, and sees the miracle of the Grail. "Before the gate was a drawbridge, which he found lowered; he was met by four squires: two disarmed him, the third took his horse, while the fourth draped him in a scarlet mantle which had never been worn. They led him to a gallery, where he waited until the arrival of two servants, who conducted him before their lord.

"They entered a hall as wide as it was long: in the centre, on a bed, lay a nobleman, whose hair was blent with gray; his cap was made of sable, lined with purple cloth, and his robe of the same stuff. He reclined, leaning on his elbow: in front, between four columns of bronze, which supported the chimneys, burned a huge fire: four hundred men could have found room about the hearth.

¹ Newell, Vol. II. p. 29. Potvin, Vol. II. p. 90, ll. 2665-2675.

Standing on either side, the servants brought him before the host, who greeted him, saying: 'Friend, be not vexed that I rise not to receive you.' He answered, 'Sir, in God's name, no more: be assured it disturbeth me not.'¹

As they converse, a squire brings to his lord a beautiful sword. "The pommel was of Arabian gold, and the sheath gold-work of Venice." The king gives the sword to Perceval, telling him that it is destined for him.

"The hall was lit with many candles; while they spake of this and that, entered a squire who bore a lance which he held by the middle; he passed between the fire and the bed, so that those that were seated observed the lance with its shining glaive; from the point flowed a drop of blood, which coursed to the bearer's hand. The stranger saw the marvel and wondered what it meant; but he be-thought himself of the teacher who had cautioned him not to be free of speech; he feared, if he spoke, that it would seem rude; therefore he asked no question.

"Presently came two fair youths, with candlesticks of chiselled gold, each having ten candles or more. They were accompanied by a damsel who in both hands carried a grail; as she entered, it emitted such luster that the candles lost their light, like the stars when riseth the sun or moon. After her went a second maid bearing a silver tray. The grail was covered with jewels, the richest in the world. Like the bearer of the lance these also passed in front of the couch, from chamber to chamber; the youth saw and dared not ask whom they served with the grail; yet he feared to mistake, for he remembered to have heard

¹ Newell, Vol. II. pp. 56-57. Potvin, Tome II. pp. 142-144, ll. 4228-4290.

that one may err by keeping silent too long as well as by speaking overmuch; howbeit, he put no question."¹

The failure of Perceval to ask the question, "Whom do they serve with the grail?" is the crisis of the story. If Perceval had asked, the sick king had been healed. Since he failed to ask, he must depart from the castle, alone and sad, bearing a curse instead of a blessing.

The tale of Perceval's return to the Grail castle, when he asks the question and releases king and castle from the spell of sorrow, is told by the followers of Chrestien. After the death of his uncle, the Fisher King, Perceval becomes Grail King. King Arthur and all his court go to the castle, where Perceval is crowned, and where all are fed for a month by the magic Grail.

Afterward, and here we are reminded of Tennyson's "Percivale," Perceval retires to a hermitage, taking with him the Grail and lance, and the silver dish. He serves God for ten years, being first acolyte, then sub-deacon and deacon, and in the fifth year, priest. When he dies, after ten years, the lance and Grail and dish disappear, doubtless being taken up into heaven, as no man sees them afterward.²

This poem of the twelfth-century French poet contains little of spiritual symbolism: it tells simply of moral and of religious duties, the duties that belong to a good knight. Failure in these brings punishment and grief. Because he has deserted his mother, and thus caused her death, Perceval is not permitted to ask the question of the Grail.

¹ Newell, Vol. II. pp. 58-59. Potvin, Tome II. pp. 144-150, ll. 4291-4432.

² Potvin, Tome VI. pp. 152-155, ll. 45267-45362. Nutt, p. 22.

Since he does not ask it, he wanders for many years, achieving knightly deeds, yet despondent, and because of his despondency forgetful of God. He is sent to a holy hermit, to whom he makes the sad confession: "Sir, in the house of the Fisher King was I, and saw the lance, whereof bleedeth the iron; of that drop that gathereth on the point of the white glaive, naught I inquired; since that time, certes, no amends have I made; and of the Grail I saw, I asked not who therewith was served; since then so much have I suffered that fain would I have died; because of that sorrow, God I forgot, and never begged for mercy, nor have I performed aught whereby I might hope that ever mercy should I obtain."¹

Chrestien did not finish his tale, and, probably, three other writers worked at it. It is, therefore, impossible to know how he would have ended it. What he might have made of the final visit to the Grail castle is perhaps hinted in the scene with the hermit. It was given to a later poet, in another country, to rewrite the whole story,² with a deeper sense of love and joy and sorrow, with a better understanding of the failure and doubt and despair that beset the man who strives to live true to human ties and duties, and true to his faith in God. The Parzival of Wolfram von Eschenbach is brave and loving, but headstrong and foolish. "A brave man, yet slowly wise."³ Among the things which the ancient knight Gurnemanz teaches him are "to have true shame;

¹ Newell, Vol. II. p. 92. Potvin, Tome II. pp. 258-259, ll. 7716-7760.

² Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*.

³ *Parzival*, Bk. I. l. 108. "Er küene traeliche wis."

to pity the poor and fight for their defence; to be humble; to be either rich or poor; to give to each due honour; to be courteous; *not to be so swift to question*; to make fit answers; to remember mercy in wrath and not to slay a conquered foe; to hold women in love and honour; to tell the truth; to be faithful in love and marriage!"¹ Parzival's love for his wife, and his longing for her in absence, occasion some of the most beautiful scenes in the poem.²

Wolfram's Parzival is beautiful as an angel to the eyes of Arthur and all the court; he is commonly sad, at first for love and loneliness, later because of his sin; he forswears the service of God in his discouragement; he thinks that God hates him, and that the thought of a true wife is man's best guide. Yet, a little later, when his cousin Sigune asks him if he has seen the Grail, he answers that it has wrought him only sorrow, that he longs for his wife, yet he knows "a deeper sorrow," and he strives for "a higher prize."³

*“ Ich habe Freud und Glück verloren
 Der Gral giebt sorgen mir genug
 Das Land, wo ich die Krone trug ;
 Liess ich, dazu das schönste Weib.
 * * * * *
 Ich sehne mich nach ihrer Zucht,
 Um ihre Minne traur ich viel;
 Doch mehr noch nach dem hohen Ziel.
 Wie ich Monsalväsche mög ersehnen
 Und den Gral.”*⁴

¹ *Parzival*, Bk. III., Weston tr.

² Bk. VI.

³ Bk. IX.

⁴ Simrock, *Modern Version*, Bk. IX. p. 166. Bartsch, Vol. II. p. 116.

Parzival's successful visit to Monsalvasche is beautifully told in Wolfram's poem, but the passage is too long to quote. The sick king Amfortas lies in such torment that he longs for death. He cannot die if he looks upon the Grail, for it gives him life. At one time he tries to win death by keeping his eyes closed, but for very weakness he opens them at last. When Parzival comes, the sufferer begs that he may be left seven nights and eight days without the Grail that he may die. But Parzival, weeping, asks, "Now say, where lies the Grail?" Then he prays and asks another question, different from that in Chrestien's story — a question that seems wrung from him by pity for the unhappy king, "What aileth thee here, mine uncle?"¹ At these words suddenly, like Lazarus arising from the dead, Amfortas is restored to health. And he bears from out his bitter pain such youth and beauty that even Parzival's seems but as the empty air.²

The spiritual beauty of this scene in the old German poem needs no interpretation. Amfortas suffers, we are told, because of an old sin, yet he cannot, if he will, escape from the life-giving presence of the Divine. At his healing, he becomes more beautiful than even the knight who brings him rescue, because he has suffered more and longer. "It is such skill God knows."³

At the conclusion of Wolfram's poem, Parzival does not

¹ Old Ger. *Oehéim, waz wirret dir?*

Mod. Ger. *Oheim was fehlet dir?*

² Bk. XVI., Weston, pp. 169-170. Simrock, p. 295. Bartsch, Vol. III. pp. 174-176.

³ Old Ger. *Got noch künste kan genuoc,*

Mod. Ger. *Gott kann der Künste noch genug.*

retire to a hermitage, but goes in search of his wife and children, and returns to rule his new kingdom of the Grail.

B. *Stories of the Early History of the Holy Grail.*

The oldest form of the story of Joseph of Arimathæa seems to be the incomplete French poem of Robert de Borron (VIII. A. 2, a. (1), below).

Briefly, the story is this: When Jesus was betrayed, which was in the chamber of the Last Supper, a Jew took the cup wherein Christ had made his sacrament and carried it to Pilate.¹ Joseph of Arimathæa, hearing of these things, was very angry. He went to Pilate and told him that he and his knights had received no pay for long service. Pilate offered him whatever he chose to ask, for he had "deserved great gifts." Joseph asked only for the body of Jesus, who had been wrongfully hung on the cross. Pilate was astonished that he asked so small a gift, and granted it immediately.² Joseph went to the cross, but the guards refused to render up the body of Jesus. Joseph returned to Pilate, who bade Nicodemus compel the soldiers to obey the order. Pilate also gave to Joseph the cup of the Last Supper.³ As Nicodemus and Joseph washed the body of Jesus, the blood burst afresh from his wounds, and Joseph let it flow into the cup and treasured it.⁴

¹ *Le Roman du Saint Graal.* Michel, ll. 395-399.

² "*Je demant le cors de Jhesu,
Qu'il ont à tort en crouiz pendu.*"

"*Pilates mout se merveilla
Quant si petit don demanda.*" — ll. 455-458.

³ ll. 508-511.

⁴ ll. 551-572.

The angry Jews cast Joseph into prison, where Christ appeared to him, bearing the cup; Joseph was rescued by Vespasian, whom he converted; one of the brothers of Joseph, Brons, was called the Rich Fisher, and became guardian of the Grail, which was to descend to his son's son.

In the later version of this story, *Le Grand Saint Graal* (VIII. A. 5, below), Joseph is represented as taking the cup from the chamber of the Last Supper. He demands the body of Christ from Pilate, making the same claim as in the poem. He is in prison for forty years, is rescued by Vespasian, and is commanded by Christ to go forth into foreign lands. He bears the cup with him in a wooden ark. Joseph's whole company is fed by miracle. He comes to Sarras, of which Evelach is king. Josephes, the son of Joseph, is made Bishop of Sarras. There is a long story of the conversion of the reluctant King Evelach.

The development of the story of the Bleeding Lance, and of the future of the Grail is here given very fully. Josephes, hurrying to aid a company of folk who are attacked by a devil, is met by an angel with a lance, and smitten through the thigh, because he has left his work of baptizing. The spear-head remains in the wound. Later, when Josephes brings his converted heathen companions to behold the Grail, a voice is heard, saying, "After my vengeance, my healing!"¹ An angel appears and touches Josephes' thigh with the lance-shaft. The lance-head falls from the wound and drops of blood follow. With

¹ *Le Saint Graal*, Hucher, Vol. II. p. 309.

this blood the angel heals the wound. The angel tells Josephes that the lance is a sign of the beginning of new wonders; when true knights shall be separated from false, and the earthly knighthood become a heavenly one.¹ "Great and terrible marvels shall be done of the Holy Grail and the lance. The marvels of the Grail shall be seen by one man alone; and by the lance but one other man shall be struck, and he a king of Josephes' kin . . . he shall be struck through the two thighs, and healed only when the Grail wonders are disclosed to the Good Knight."² The lance seems here to be identified with the one with which Jesus was pierced on the cross.

The story of the coming to Britain of the miracles of the Grail, of the descendants of Josephes, and of Nascien, the converted heathen king, are far too long, too complicated, and too contradictory to follow.³ The important points to the student of Malory and Tennyson are that this author directly connects the legends of the wounded king,⁴ of the miracle-working cup, and of the bleeding lance, with the passion and death of Christ, and that he declares that there shall be a spiritual knighthood more worthy than the earthly one. There are prophecies of the "Good Knight who shall bring to an end the adventures of Grande Bretagne." His name is given, "Galahad, whose father shall be Lancelot and whose mother the daughter of King Pelleas."⁵

¹ *Car les cevaleries tierriennes devenront celestieus.*

— Hucher, Vol. II. p. 311.

² Hucher, Vol. II. pp. 298-313.

³ See Nutt, pp. 52-64.

⁴ Cf. *Perceval Romances*, above.

⁵ Hucher, Vol. III. p. 296.

It may be that Robert de Borron's poem is older than even Chrestien's *Perceval*. It may be that they are contemporary, but independent. The important thing to notice is that neither Chrestien nor Wolfram connects the Grail with the Last Supper, nor the lance with the death on the cross. That connection is most fully and explicitly made by the author of *Le Grand Saint Graal*.

C. *The Story of the Quest of the Holy Grail.*

The story which Malory and Tennyson followed is neither of the foregoing. It is a French prose romance, *La Queste del Saint Graal* (VIII. A. 4, below). This romance is unquestionably later than the story of *Perceval*, it may be later than the early history of the Holy Cup. It is the consummation of these two lines of legend, and in a sense the outcome of them. It is the expression of the spirit that brought into close relation the knightly life and the religious life of the Middle Ages. The Parzival of Wolfram is a knight whose chief service is that of the Grail, a holy calling; but a part of his duty, as distinctly taught him, is to be true to all human relations, to be a faithful son, husband, father, soldier, and ruler. Humanity and human helpfulness are the flower of his spirit's life. One of the dominant ideas of mediæval religious teaching, that of separation from the world as the ideal of holiness, finds only slight expression in Wolfram's poem. The hermit, Trevisent, has a significant part in the story, and King Amfortas, when healed of his long agony, retires to a hermitage, but *Perceval* must fulfill his human duties.

To other of the mediæval writers the idea of the ascetic life seemed imperative; and so it came about that the knight who might see the Grail must be not only good and pure, but separate from the world. He must love and wed no woman, he must have no worldly desires. The common joys and rewards of life must give place to the one supreme purpose to follow the heavenly voice wherever it might call. So Gawain and Perceval, brave and courteous, but faulty knights, gave place to Galahad, the sinless knight. Something of spiritual truth and beauty was gained in this latest form of the Grail legend, but something also was lost — would have been lost utterly, had not the author of *The Quest of the Grail* made all the knights partakers in the search. As if he realized that imperfection must be a part of every human action, if human readers are to be interested, this old romance writer has made many knights seek that which only one may find, and to Lancelot and to Perceval are given partial visions of that glory whose consummation is for Galahad alone.

The spiritual power of the story, in this its latest mediæval form, is its protest against an ideal of life which exalted mere valor into a virtue that excused all vice. Its limitation is the monastic blindness to the truth that the Christlike life is one which does battle with human sin, not one which escapes from human ties.

In spite of all its defects and limitations, the story of Galahad is the cry after holiness of a world whose eyes were blinded by the blood and dust of battle, whose heart was tired of the false and gross in human life and love, a world which had lost its vision of God and yet remem-

bered dimly that "the pure in heart shall see his face."

Though much of Tennyson's poem is entirely underived, many passages follow more or less closely the narrative as contained in Malory's translation of *La Queste del Saint Graal*. A number of parallel passages are given in the notes to this volume, but the scene in which the Grail appears in the great hall and the knights swear the vow should be carefully compared in the early and later versions.

"And the King and all estates went home unto Camelot, and so went to evensong to the great minister, and so after upon that to supper, and every knight sat in his own place as they were toforehand. Then anon they heard cracking and crying of thunder, that them thought the place should all to-drive. In the midst of this blast entered a sunbeam more clearer by seven times than ever they saw day, and all they were alighted of the grace of the Holy Ghost. Then began every knight to behold other, and either saw other, by their seeming, fairer than ever they saw afore. Not for then there was no knight might speak one word a great while, and so they looked every man on other as they had been dumb. Then there entered into the hall the Holy Grail covered with white samite, but there was none might see it, nor who bare it. And there was all the hall fulfilled with good odours, and every knight had such meats and drinks as he best loved in this world. And when the Holy Grail had been borne through the hall, then the Holy Vessel departed suddenly, and they wist not where it became; then had they all breath to speak. And then the King yielded thankings to God,

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of His good grace that he had sent them. Certes, said the King, we ought to thank our Lord Jesus greatly for that he hath shewed us this day at the reverence of this high feast of Pentecost. Now, said Sir Gawaine, we have been served this day of what meats and drinks we thought on; but one thing beguiled us, we might not see the Holy Grail, it was so preciousy covered. Wherefore, I will make here a vow, that to-morn, without longer abiding, I shall labour in the quest of the Sangreal, that I shall hold me out a twelvemonth and a day, or more if need be, and never shall I return again unto the court till I have seen it more openly than it hath been seen here; and if I may not speed I shall return again as he that may not be against the will of our Lord Jesus Christ. When they of the Table Round heard Sir Gawaine say so, they arose up, the most part, and made many such avows as Sir Gawaine had made. Anon as King Arthur heard this he was greatly displeased, for he wist well they might not again say their vows. Alas, said King Arthur unto Sir Gawaine, ye have well nigh slain me with the avow and promise that ye have made; for through you ye have bereft me the fairest fellowship and the truest knighthood that ever were seen together in any realm of the world; for when they depart from hence I am sure they all shall never meet any more in this world, for they shall die many in the quest. And so it forthinketh me a little, for I have loved them as well as my life, wherefore it shall grieve me right sore, the departition of this fellowship: for I have had an old custom to have them in my fellowship.”¹

¹ Mal., Bk. XIII. Ch. VII. See also l. 179, note, below.

2. TENNYSON'S POEM.

The earliest of Tennyson's Arthurian idylls, *Morte d'Arthur*, written in 1834, is simply a modern version of the old incident as it is told in the Middle English poem, *Morte Arthur*, and in the *Morte Darthur* of Sir Thomas Malory. When *The Holy Grail* was written, in 1869, the poet's plan for the *Idylls* had grown into a complex epic, which, though not entirely allegorical, used the old stories as parables of modern life, and gave to names of persons and places meanings almost as symbolic as those of the *Pilgrim's Progress*.

In regard to the allegorical interpretations of the *Idylls of the King*, Tennyson said, "They have taken my hobby, and ridden it too hard, and have explained some things too allegorically, although there is an allegorical, or perhaps rather a parabolic, drift, in the poem. Of course Camelot, for instance, a city of shadowy palaces, is everywhere symbolic of the gradual growth of human beliefs and institutions, and of the spiritual development of man. Yet there is no single fact or incident in the *Idylls*, however seemingly mystical, which cannot be explained as without any mystery or allegory whatever. . . . I hate to be tied down to say 'this means that,' because the thought within the image is much more than any one interpretation."¹

In the allegory of the spiritual life, as Tennyson conceived it, the poem of *The Holy Grail* holds highest place. It is fortunate that it follows the old stories but slightly,

¹ *Memoir*, Vol. II. Ch. V. pp. 126-127.

thus giving less occasion for allegorical interpretation of simple narrative. A large part of the poem has no antecedent, and the underived portions are often the most beautiful. Tennyson has altered the import of the old romance, in order to express his conviction that higher than Galahad's purpose is that of the King, who strives to bring the holy life within reach of all his subjects.

“*The Holy Grail* shows us the strife between superstition, which is a sensual religion, and true faith, which is spiritual. This is in some respects the richest and most splendid of the *Idylls*, but it is also, by reason of its theme, the most confused. Out of the mystical twilight which envelops the action this truth emerges: that those knights who thought of the Grail only as an external wonder, a miracle which they fain would see because others had seen it, ‘followed wandering fires’; while those to whom it became a symbol of inward purity and grace, like Galahad and Percivale, and even the dull, honest, simple-minded Bors and the sin-tormented Lancelot, finally attained unto the vision. But the King, who remained at home and kept the plain path of daily duty, is the real hero of the *Idyll*, though he bore no part in the quest.”¹

Tennyson's own words on this subject are given by his son: “At twenty-four I meant to write an epic or a drama of King Arthur; and I thought that I should take twenty years about the work. They will now say that I have been forty years about it. *The Holy Grail* is one of the most imaginative of my poems. I have expressed there my strong feeling as to the Reality of the Unseen. The

¹ Van Dyke, *The Poetry of Tennyson*, p. 184.

end, when the king speaks of his work and of his visions, is intended to be the summing up of all in the highest note by the highest of human men. These three lines in Arthur's speech are the (spiritually) central lines of the *Idylls*: —

‘In moments when he feels he cannot die,
And knows himself no vision to himself,
Nor the High God a vision.’”¹

3. WAGNER'S *Parsifal*.

It is interesting to compare the nineteenth-century story of Galahad as told in Tennyson's *Holy Grail* with the nineteenth-century story of Perceval as told in Wagner's great poetic opera *Parsifal*. There is no space in this little book to tell the story, or to comment on the teaching of *Parsifal*, but one or two points of comparison may be noted.

Parsifal is the wood-bred, unlesioned youth of the oldest romances. He is the chosen and the stainless one who shall heal the sick King; and he is the savior who shall deliver the Grail kingdom from Klingsor, the worker of evil. Wagner's *Parsifal* is pure as is Tennyson's Galahad, and is as untouched by the evil in the world; but he is a greater and profounder character because he fulfills his mission of healing, not by reason of his purity alone, but also and chiefly by reason of his share in the temptations and the suffering of those whom he saves. Wagner's poem is strong precisely where Tennyson's is weak, even as Wolfram's *Parzival* is strong where the French *Queste*

¹ *Memoir*, Vol. II. Ch. IV. pp. 89-90.

is weak. In the ancient and in the modern stories, Galahad moves apart from pain and sin and failure; in the ancient and in the modern stories, Parzival comes "by paths of wandering and suffering" and is made wise by "fellow-pain." Tennyson, conscious of this weakness in the old romance, makes Galahad subordinate to Arthur. Wagner conceives of a hero who shall possess both holiness and helpfulness. The purity of the mediæval Galahad and the humanity of the mediæval Parzival meet in him who is the helper of men.

"Du — Reiner
mitleidvoll Duldender,
heilthatvoll Wissender!"¹

II. BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

"Half-way between Horncastle and Spilsby, in a land of quiet villages, large fields, gray hillsides, and noble, tall towered churches, on the lower slope of a Lincolnshire wold, the pastoral hamlet of Somersby nestles, embosomed in trees. Here, on the 6th of August, 1809, was born, in his father's rectory, Alfred Tennyson. He was the fourth of twelve children, eight sons and four daughters, most of them more or less true poets."² This village rectory was Tennyson's home during childhood, boyhood, and early manhood. Even after the father's death, in 1831, the

¹ "Thou — Spotless!
Sufferer of fellow-pain,
Learner of the healing deed!"

— *Parsifal*, Act III., Forman's Tr.

² *Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Memoir by his Son*, Vol. I. Ch. I. p. 2.

family lived on in the old home till 1837. The associations of the rectory, and of the surrounding country, find frequent expression in the poems of Tennyson. His son writes:¹ "In 1892 I visited the old home, and when I returned, told my father that the trees had grown up obscuring the view from the Rectory, and that the house itself looked very desolate. All he answered was, 'Poor little place!' He always spoke of it with an affectionate remembrance; of the woodbine that climbed into the bay window of his nursery; of the vaulted Gothic dining-room with stained glass windows, making, my uncle Charles Turner used to say, 'butterfly souls' on the walls; of the beautiful stone chimney piece carved by his father; of the pleasant little drawing-room lined with book-shelves, and furnished with yellow curtains, sofas, and chairs, and looking out on the lawn. This lawn was overshadowed on one side by wych-elms, and on the other by larch and sycamore trees. Here, my father said, he made his early song 'A spirit haunts the year's last hours.'" The brook at the foot of the lawn "haunted him through life"; and the orchard was "a sunny little spot that awoke in his mind pleasant memories." "How often," he said, "have I risen in the early dawn to see the golden globes lying in the dewy grass among those apple trees." He delighted, too, to recall the rare richness of the bowery lanes; the ancient Norman cross standing in the churchyard, close to the door of the quaint little church; the wooded hollow of Holywell; the cold springs flowing from under the sandstone rocks; the flowers, the mosses, and the ferns."² This last clause is characteristic

¹ *Memoir*, Vol. I. Ch. I. pp. 2-3.

² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

of the poet who had eyes always for minute as well as for great things of beauty; for the shining cobwebs on the furze bushes as well as for the great plain with its "crowded farms and lessening towers" sweeping away to the sea. It was in childhood that Tennyson learned to know and love the sea, for summer holidays were spent on the Lincolnshire coast.¹ The peaceful inland country about his home, and the sights and sounds of the wild North Sea coast, ministered from his earliest years to Tennyson's love for beauty. He might have said with Wordsworth, "fair seed-time had my soul."

Alfred Tennyson began to write verses at about the age of eight.² In 1827 a little book called *Poems by Two Brothers* was published at Louth. The brothers were Alfred Tennyson and his brother Charles.³ Lord Hallam Tennyson says, "When these poems were written my Uncle Charles was between sixteen and eighteen, and my father between fifteen and seventeen."⁴ The early poetry of Tennyson, as seen in this little volume, shows no remarkable promise, and the same may be said of the most of the early fragments first printed in the Memoir.

In February, 1828, Alfred Tennyson and his brother Charles entered Trinity College, Cambridge, "where their elder brother, Frederick, was already a distinguished scholar."⁵ The story of Tennyson's life at Cambridge is an ideal chapter in literary biography. His physical strength and beauty, his fine scholarship and noble character, made

¹ *Memoir*, Vol. I. Ch. I. p. 20.

² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³ Charles Tennyson Turner.

⁴ *Memoir*, Ch. I. p. 22.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Ch. II. p. 33.

him a notable figure among a group of brilliant fellow-students.¹

Most of the members of this little college circle became in later life distinguished in letters, theology, or science. One is known to all readers of English poetry as the Friend of *In Memoriam*. Arthur Hallam,² the dearest of all Tennyson's Cambridge associates, and, it may be, the most gifted, died at Vienna in 1833, in his twenty-third year. What his friendship and his loss were to Tennyson is written in the elegy, *In Memoriam*, a series of lyrics composed during the years following Arthur Hallam's death. *In Memoriam* was not completed and published until 1850. To many of Tennyson's readers it will be always his most beautiful and most significant work. Tennyson's first volume, *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, was published in 1830,³ but the influence of the new poet dates from the next volume,⁴ of 1832 (dated 1833), which contained *The Lady of Shalott*, *The Miller's Daughter*, *The Palace of Art*, *Ænone*, *The Lotus Eaters*, etc. Though this volume of 1832 was "only partially successful," some of the poems contained in it became and remained favorites with lovers of true poetry.

With the exception of *The Lover's Tale*, privately printed in 1833, Tennyson published no volume for ten years. But the decade between 1832 and 1842 is perhaps the most important in his literary life. Through sorrow and responsibility the poet's sympathies had become deeper and more inclusive, and he grew constantly in mastery of his art.⁵

¹ *Memoir*, Vol. I. Ch. II. pp. 35-36.

² *Ibid.*, Ch. IV,

³ *Ibid.*, Ch. III,

⁴ *Ibid.*, Ch. V.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Ch. V. p. 122.

Most of *In Memoriam* was written in these years, and they mark also the beginning of poems founded upon the Arthurian legends.¹ The exquisite *Lady of Shalott* is, probably, the earliest of the series; the *Morte d'Arthur* was written in 1834, and *Sir Galahad* and *Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere* are contained in the volume of 1842. In 1837 the Tennyson family moved from the Somersby home. Until 1840 they lived at High Beach, in Epping Forest; in 1840 at Tunbridge Wells; and in 1841 removed to Baxley, near Maidstone.² About this time, 1837, Tennyson became engaged to Emily Sellwood, but "they were not married until 1850, when his poems brought him a competency."³

No less than five editions of the poems of 1842 were published before 1850, and in 1847 *The Princess* appeared.⁴

The middle of the century marks a happy height in the poet's career. In June of this year he married⁵ the lady whom he had long loved, and he published *In Memoriam*.⁶ In November he was appointed Poet Laureate of England,⁷ to succeed Wordsworth, who had died in the preceding April.

In the first years after their marriage the Tennysons lived at Twickenham, and here Hallam, the present Lord Tennyson, was born. In 1853 Tennyson took a house on the Isle of Wight, Farringford, which was to be his home for forty years, though after 1869 he divided his time between this and a house which he built at Aldworth, Hazlemere. It was at Aldworth that he died.

¹ *Memoir*, Vol. I., Ch. V. p. 142.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Ch. XV. p. 328.

² *Ibid.*, Ch. VI. pp. 149-150.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Ch. XIV. p. 297.

³ *Ibid.*, Ch. VI. p. 150. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Ch. XV. p. 334.

In 1850 Tennyson had become not only Poet Laureate, but, in reality, the most loved and honored of living English poets. Especially he held the hearts of the young men of England, and by them he was read, quoted, and imitated. Canon Dixon writes of Oxford in 1853: "It is difficult to the present generation to understand the Tennysonian enthusiasm which then prevailed both in Oxford and the world. All reading men were Tennysonians; all sets of reading men talked poetry. Poetry was the thing, and it was felt with justice that this was due to Tennyson. Tennyson had invented a new poetry, a new poetic English. His use of words was new, and every piece that he wrote was a conquest of a new region. This lasted till *Maud*, in 1855, which was his last poem that mattered."¹

It is impossible to notice the poems of these years. *Maud* was published in 1855. Between 1857 and 1885 the *Idylls of the King* grew into permanent and completed form, and *Enoch Arden* and other poems of English contemporary life were written. To the last decade of this period belong the dramas: *Queen Mary*, in 1875, *Harold*, in 1876, and *Becket*, in 1884. From time to time also appeared books of ballads and lyrics, ending with the volume, *The Death of Ænone, Akbar's Dream and Other Poems*, published October 28, 1892, just three weeks after the death of the poet.²

In 1884 Alfred Tennyson was made Baron Tennyson of Aldworth and Farringford. In 1873 and in 1874 Tennyson had refused the offer of a baronetcy.³ On accepting the title

¹ Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, Vol. I. p. 44.

² *Memoir*, Vol. I. p. xxi. ³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II. Ch. VI. pp. 145, 161.

conferred in 1884, he said to his son, "By Gladstone's advice I have consented to take the peerage, but for my own part I shall regret my simple name all my life."¹

A brief note, which must be chiefly dates and names, can give no impression of a long and beautiful life, such as was Tennyson's. The events of his life are his attainments in knowledge, in art, in spiritual insight. These may be traced in his poems; and, if one would know also of his surroundings, of his happy family life, and of his many friendships, one must read of these things in the detailed *Memoir by his Son*.

There is a beautiful unity between the man's life as portrayed in the memoir, and the poet's work as found in the poems. Tennyson is the close student, impatient of any inaccuracy, the careful workman, unwilling to leave a single line until he has perfected it, the lover of visible beauty, and, even more earnestly, of spiritual beauty, the seeker for the truth that underlies all mysteries. Though he fights many battles with doubt, he does not lose his faith, and the late lyrics echo the most triumphant strains of *In Memoriam*.

In youth he learns: —

"To feel, altho' no tongue can prove,
That every cloud, that spreads above
And veileth love, itself is love."²

In middle life he sings: —

"Love is and was my Lord and King,
And in his presence I attend
To hear the tidings of my friend
Which every hour his couriers bring.

¹ *Memoir*, Vol. II. Ch. XV. p. 300.

² *Two Voices*, Globe, p. 35.

“ Love is and was my King and Lord,
 And will be, tho' as yet I keep
 Within his court on earth, and sleep
 Encompass'd by his faithful guard,

“ And hear at times a sentinel
 Who moves about from place to place,
 And whispers to the worlds of space,
 In the deep night that all is well.”¹

In old age he prays : —

“ let not Reason fail me, nor the sod
 Draw from my death thy living flower and grass,
 Before I learn that Love, which is, and was
 My Father, and my Brother, and my God ! ”²

Tennyson, all his life, had shunned publicity. So far as was possible, he withdrew into the society of few and near friends. But at his death on the 6th of October, 1892, all England gave him mourning and honor, and he was buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey, “next to Robert Browning and in front of the Chaucer monument.”³

III. CHRONOLOGY OF TENNYSON'S LIFE.

1808. August 6. Birth. Somersby, Lincolnshire.

1816-1820. School. Louth, Lincolnshire.

1828-1831. Trinity College, Cambridge. Friendship with Arthur Hallam.

1830. *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical.*

1831. Return to Somersby. Death of his father.

¹ *In Memoriam*, xxvi, Globe, p. 277.

² *Doubt and Prayer*, Globe, p. 867.

³ *Memoir*, Vol. II. Ch. XXIII. p. 431.

1832. *Poems*. (Dated 1833.)
 1833. September 15. Death of Arthur Hallam at Vienna.
 1832-1842. Composition of many poems ; publication of very few.
 1842. *Poems*, two volumes.
 1850. Marriage to Emily Sellwood. Publication of *In Memoriam*.
 Appointment as Poet Laureate.
 1853. Home at Farringford, Isle of Wight.
 1884. Peerage.
 1892. October 6. Death at Aldworth.
 1892. October 12. Burial in Westminster Abbey.

IV. CHRONOLOGY OF THE PUBLICATION OF TENNYSON'S POEMS.

See *Memoir*, pp. xviii-xxii for complete list of published works.

1827. *Poems by Two Brothers*.
 1830. *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*.
 1832. *Poems*.
 1842. *Poems*.
 1847. *The Princess*.
 1850. *In Memoriam*.
 1852. *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*.
 1854. *Charge of the Light Brigade*, published in *The Examiner*,
 December 9, 1854.
 1855. *Maud*.
 1859. *Idylls of the King*.
 1864. *Enoch Arden*.
 1869. *The Holy Grail*.
 1871. *The Last Tournament*.
 1872. *Gareth and Lynette*.
 1875. *Queen Mary*.
 1876. *Harold*.
 1880. *Ballads, and Other Poems*.
 1884. *Becket*.
 1885. *Tiresias, and Other Poems*.
 1889. *Demeter, and Other Poems*.
 1892. *The Death of Ænone, and other Poems*.
 1894. *The Complete Single Volume Edition of the Works, with Last
 Alterations, etc.* London. Macmillan and Company.

V. CHRONOLOGY OF THE ARTHURIAN POEMS.

In the 1832 volume *The Lady of Shalott*.

1834. *Morte d'Arthur*, written, Mem., Vol. I. Ch. V.

In the 1842 volume, *Sir Galahad, Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere, Morte d'Arthur*.

1857. *Enid and Nimue* (*Nimue* afterward became *Vivien* and *Enid* was divided into two idylls).

1859. *Enid, Merlin and Vivien, Elaine, Guinevere*.

1869. *The Holy Grail, The Coming of Arthur, Pelleas and Ettarre, The Passing of Arthur*. (*The Passing of Arthur* is altered from the *Morte d'Arthur* of 1834.)

1871. *The Last Tournament*.

1872. *Gareth and Lynette*.

1885. *Balin and Balan*.

The permanent order of the *Idylls of the King* became :—

1862. *Dedication*.

1869. *The Coming of Arthur*.

The Round Table :—

1872. *Gareth and Lynette*.

1857. *The Marriage of Geraint*.

1857. *Geraint and Enid*.

1885. *Balin and Balan*.

1857. *Merlin and Vivien*.

1859. *Lancelot and Elaine*.

1869. *The Holy Grail*.

1869. *Pelleas and Ettarre*.

1871. *The Last Tournament*.

1859. *Guinevere*.

1869. *The Passing of Arthur*.

1873. *To the Queen*.

Cf. Jones, *Growth of the Idylls of the King*, p. 46, note.

VI. SUMMARY OF THE STORY AS TOLD IN SIR THOMAS MALORY'S *MORTE DARTHUR*.

The story of the Holy Grail is contained in Malory's *Morte Darthur*, Bks. XIII.-XVII.

The few passages which Tennyson follows are quoted in the notes and introduction, but a brief summary of Malory's narrative may be given here. It will be seen that Tennyson has drawn upon the older story only at rare intervals. His account of the adventures of the knights, especially of Sir Bors, Sir Perceval, and Sir Galahad, is almost wholly new.

Mal.,
Bk. XIII.
Ch. I.

At the vigil of the Pentecost all the fellowship of the Round Table was gathered in the hall at Camelot. A fair gentlewoman entered asking for Sir Launcelot, whom she saluted on behalf of King Pelles.

Ch. II.

She begged Launcelot to ride away with her into a forest to an abbey of nuns. Here the young Galahad was presented to Sir Launcelot, who made him knight. Galahad would not go with Launcelot to King Arthur.

On Launcelot's return to court, golden letters were found written on the vacant seat at the Round Table, the Siege Perilous, declaring that this seat should be filled four hundred and fifty-four years after the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, that is, at that same feast of Pentecost.

A stone was seen floating upon the river with

a sword thrust into it, and the pommel thereof was wrought with "subtle letters of gold." Sir
Ch. III. Gawaine and Sir Perceval sought to draw the sword, but might not move it.

The king and all the knights went into the court to dinner. All the seats were filled, save only the Siege Perilous. An old man entered, bringing a young knight clad in red armor. The
Ch. IV. youth, who was Galahad, was seated in the Siege Perilous, and all knew him to be the chosen knight

Ch. V. who should achieve the Sangreal. Galahad drew the sword from the stone. A damsel appeared, who declared that Launcelot was no longer the best knight of the world, but that now there was one better than he. Then she told the king that this day should the Sangreal appear in his house and feed all the fellowship of the Round Table.

Ch. VI. The king appointed a tournament that he might prove Sir Galahad. Sir Galahad shattered many knights, but not Sir Launcelot nor Sir Perceval.

Ch. VII. The queen desired to see Galahad, and knew him as Sir Launcelot's son.

Cf. p. 30. At supper the Holy Grail entered the hall, and the company was fed of it. It was so covered that none might see it. The knights vowed that they would ride in quest of it, and the king was
Ch. VIII. displeased and saddened. One hundred and fifty knights put on their helms and departed amid weeping and great sorrow.

Ch. IX. Then the story tells of Sir Galahad, who had as

yet no shield. After four days he reached a White Abbey. Here he learned of a white shield bearing a red cross. This shield might be safely worn only by the worthiest knight in the world. After the shield had caused the death of King Bagdemagus, it was given to Sir Galahad.

- Ch. X. A white knight told Sir Galahad how the shield was made for King Evelake in the days of Joseph of Aramathie; and that the red cross was made of the blood of Joseph himself, who prophesied that no man should bear the shield safely until the time of the good knight Galahad.

Then the White Knight and Galahad returned to the Abbey.

- Ch. XII. Sir Galahad knighted 'Melias, a squire, who
Ch. XIII. begged to ride with him on his quest. Sir Melias was wounded, and Sir Galahad avenged him.
- Ch. XIV. Sir Galahad delivered a king's daughter op-
Ch. XV. pressed in her castle by evil knights.
- Ch. XVI. Then the story leaves Sir Galahad, and tells of Sir Gawaine. Sir Gawaine rode many journeys. At last he came to the White Abbey where Sir Galahad had the white shield, thence to the abbey where Sir Melias lay sick.

Gawaine met with Sir Gareth and Sir Uwaine. They came to the castle of maidens where the three knights slew seven brethren. They lost the way that Sir Galahad rode, and they parted from each other. Sir Gawaine came to an hermitage. The hermit told him that he was evil of life, and

must do penance. "Nay," said Sir Gawaine, "I may do no penance, for we knights adventurous oft suffer great woe and pain."

Ch. XVII. The tale returns to Sir Galahad.

Sir Galahad met with Sir Launcelot and Sir Perceval, but they knew him not. Sir Galahad jousted with them and overthrew them both. He rode away, and they, knowing him, tried to follow him, but he rode out of their sight.

Ch. XVIII. Sir Launcelot rode in a wild forest as adventure led him. He found a stony cross and a chapel waste and broken. He laid him down to sleep upon his shield before the cross. Half sleeping and waking, Sir Launcelot saw a sick man borne on a litter. The Holy Grail was borne before the sick man and healed him. When the sick man was healed and armed, he rode away on Sir Launcelot's horse.

Ch. XIX. Sir Launcelot waked, and a voice bade him depart from this holy place. He came to an hermitage, and confessed and was shriven and made great sorrow.

Bk. XIV. The story tells how Sir Perceval came to a recluse and asked counsel, and how she told him that she was his aunt. She told him of Sir Galahad, and that Merlin made the Siege Perilous, in the which Sir Galahad sat at meat on Whitsunday.

Ch. III. Then Sir Perceval rode till evensong, and came to a monastery where was an old sick king, Evelake. The king had prayed that he might not die till the good knight be come who should achieve

the Sangrael. He had lived three hundred winters.

Ch. IV. Sir Perceval fought with twenty knights. His horse was slain, but he was delivered by Sir Galahad.

Ch. V. A woman gave to Sir Perceval a black horse

Ch. VI. which was a fiend.

Sir Perceval slew a lion that fought with a serpent, and the lion followed Sir Perceval.

Ch. VII. Sir Perceval dreamed a marvelous dream. He came to a ship, and an old man told him the meaning of his dream, which was to warn him of a battle which should befall him.

Ch. VIII. A damsel of great beauty asked help of Sir

Ch. IX. Perceval. He promised her help and proffered her his love, but he was saved from her wiles by the

Ch. X. red cross on the pommel of his sword. Sir Perceval for penance smote himself through the thigh. He knew that the damsel was the master fiend of hell.

Sir Perceval entered into a ship and departed.

Bk. XV.

OF SIR LAUNCELOT.

Ch. I. The hermit gave to Sir Launcelot an horse, an helm, and a sword. He came to a chapel and found an old hermit richly clothed in white. Within the chapel lay an old man dead. The living hermit conjured a fiend, who told how the dead hermit was not lost, but saved.

Ch. II. Sir Launcelot told the living hermit of his quest. The hermit told Sir Launcelot that because of his sin he should have no power to see the Holy Grail, and he gave to Sir Launcelot the hair shirt of the dead man. Sir Launcelot rode into a forest, where he met a gentlewoman, who told him that he should find good lodging in the morning.

Ch. III. Sir Launcelot fell asleep by a wayside cross, and had a vision. In the morning he rode on, and smote down the knight who had before taken his horse.

Ch. IV. The hermit expounded Sir Launcelot's vision, and told him that Sir Galahad was his son.

Ch. V. Sir Launcelot saw two companies of knights fighting. He went to the aid of the weaker party and did marvelous deeds, but was at last faint of fighting.

Ch. VI. He sorrowed much that he was shamed in the fight. He came to a chapel where was a recluse, and he told her how it befell him at the tournament. She told him how he had fought on the side of the earthly knights, and against the heavenly, because he was of evil faith and poor belief.

Sir Launcelot rode on and was met by a black knight, who smote his horse to the earth and disappeared.

Bk. XVI. OF SIR GAWAINE AND SIR BORS.

Ch. I. Sir Gawaine rode from Whitsuntide until Michaelmas, and found none adventure that pleased him. He met Sir Ector de Maris and said to him, "I am nigh weary of this quest." Sir Ector and Sir Gawaine rode more than eight days, and found an old chapel where each had a marvelous dream.

Ch. II. Then a voice came to them both which said, "Knights full of evil faith and of poor belief, ye may not come to the adventures of the Sangreal."

 Sir Gawaine met and slew Sir Uwayne, who was also in quest of the Sangreal.

Ch. III. Sir Ector and Sir Gawaine came to an hermitage. The hermit expounded their visions, and said,

Ch. IV. "Knights of poor faith and of wicked belief, these three things failed, — charity, abstinence, and truth, — therefore ye may not attain that high adventure of the Sangreal."

Ch. V. They departed, and rode long without any adventure.

Ch. VI. Sir Bors departed from Camelot, and met a good man who advised him to eat only bread and water till he should sit at the table of the Sangreal.

 He saw a bird which fed its little ones out of its own blood and so died, and he knew well that it was a sign.

Ch. VII. Sir Bors lodged with a lady, and became her

Ch. VIII. champion. He dreamed two dreams.

- He fought with Sir Pridam and overthrew him,
Ch. IX. and brought back to the lady her estates. He met Sir Lionel, his brother, naked and beaten, and bound upon a horse. Sir Bors left his brother in order to rescue a lady, and afterward was told that
- Ch. X. Sir Lionel had been slain.
- Ch. XI. A false priest interpreted to Sir Bors his dreams, and led him to a tower where were knights and ladies, one the fairest lady he had ever seen.
- Ch. XII. The fair lady tempted Sir Bors, but he crossed himself, and he heard a great noise and a great cry, as though all the fiends of hell had been about him; and therewith he saw neither tower nor lady nor chapel.
- Ch. XIII. He came to an abbey, and heard the true signification of his dreams, and that the false priest was a fiend, and that Sir Lionel was yet alive.
- Ch. XIV. Sir Bors met Sir Lionel, who nearly slew him for anger.
- Ch. XV. Sir Lionel slew a hermit who would have saved Sir Bors.
- Ch. XVI. Sir Colgrevice fought for Sir Bors, and was slain by Sir Lionel.
- Ch. XVII. Sir Bors prayed Sir Lionel to leave this battle, but at last was forced to defend himself. There came a voice which charged Sir Bors to touch him not. Then a cloud alit between them, and they were sore afraid, and fell to the earth in a swoon. They forgave each other, and Sir Bors rode on his way and came to an abbey nigh the sea.

In his sleep there came a voice to him, and bade him go to the sea. When he came to the strand, he found a ship covered with white samite. The ship went flying, but it was so dark that Sir Bors knew no man. When he awaked, he saw Sir Perceval and they were glad. Then said Sir Perceval, "We lack nothing but Galahad the good

Bk. XVII. knight."

Ch. I.

(Cf. Bk.

XIV. Ch.

IV.)

When Galahad had rescued Perceval from the twenty knights, he went into a wide forest where he rode many journeys. He passed by a castle where was a tournament, and among the knights, Sir Ector and Sir Gawaine. Sir Galahad smote down Sir Gawaine, and rode away. Sir Ector said to Sir Gawaine, "Me seemeth your quest is done." "And yours is not done," said Gawaine, "but mine is done, I shall seek no further."

Ch. II.

And Galahad rode till he was benighted in an hermitage. A gentlewoman came and begged Galahad to follow her. So they rode and came to a castle, and, after he had ate and slept, they rode to the sea, and there they found the ship where were Bors and Perceval. The ship left the land, and they met another ship. In the end of the ship they found written, "Thou man which shall enter into this ship, beware thou be steadfast in belief, for I am Faith." The gentlewoman told them that

Ch. III.

she was Sir Perceval's sister. They entered into the ship, and found a fair bed, and a sword rich and fair. The sword had a scabbard of serpent's

Ch. IV.

skin, and thereon were letters of gold and silver.

Ch. V. Sir Perceval's sister told them the story of the

Ch. VII. sword and scabbard, and of the making of the ship, and she bade Galahad grip the sword, and she girded him therewith. Then they went from that ship into the other.

They came to the coast of Scotland and to
Ch. VIII. a castle, where they were attacked by many knights.

Ch. IX. They came into a waste forest, and they saw a white hart which four lions led, and this signified Our Lord and the four Evangelists.

Ch. X. They fought with knights of a strange castle.

Ch. XI. Sir Perceval's sister gave her blood for the healing of the lady of the castle, and died, but the lady was healed.

Sir Perceval's sister was placed in a barge covered with black silk, and the wind arose and drove the barge from the land.

Sir Bors rode away to succor a wounded knight.

Ch. XII. Sir Galahad and Sir Perceval came to a chapel where were tombs of many maidens, all of whom had been slain for the dead lady's sake.

The two knights parted from each other.

Sir Launcelot came to the sea, and found a ship
Ch. XIII. without sail or oar. He entered and slept till day; and when he awoke he found a gentlewoman dead, the which was Sir Perceval's sister.

Galahad came to the ship, and there was great

joy between them. They dwelt in the ship half a year, and had many adventures.

Ch. XIV. A white knight came and bade Galahad follow him into the forest.

The wind arose and drove Launcelot more than a month through the sea, till he arrived before the

Ch. XV. Castle of Carbonek. Sir Launcelot saw the Holy

Ch. XVI. Grail covered with red samite. He was smitten down as by a breath of fire, and lay for four and twenty days as a dead man.

He awoke, and was told that he should see no more of the Sangreal than he had seen.

Sir Launcelot was brought before King Pelles.

Sir Ector came to the castle, but was told that he might not enter because of the Sangreal.

Ch. XVII. Sir Launcelot returned to King Arthur's court, where he found Sir Gawaine, Sir Ector, and Sir Lionel.

Ch. XVIII. Sir Galahad came to the castle of King Mordrains, who, though he had long been blind, saw him and blessed him and died.

Sir Galahad buried King Mordrains, as a king ought to be, and came into a perilous forest, where was the burning well. He came to the abbey where Launcelot had been.

Ch. XIX. Sir Galahad met Sir Perceval and Sir Bors, and

Ch. XX. all came to Carbonek to King Pelles, who knew them.

Joseph of Arimathæa, who had been dead three hundred years, appeared to Galahad and his fellows.

The knights were fed of the Sangreal.

At the Sacrament Christ himself appeared, and said to Galahad: "And now hast thou seen that thou most desired to see, but yet hast thou not seen it so openly as thou shalt see it in the city of Sarras, in the spiritual place. Therefore thou must go hence, and bear with thee this Holy Vessel; for this night it shall depart from the realm of Logris, that it shall never be seen more here."

Ch. XXI. Galahad healed the maimed king with the blood from the bleeding spear; Galahad, Perceval, and Bors came again to their ship, and found therein the Sangreal covered with red samite.

They came to the city of Sarras, and the King of Sarras cast them into prison.

Ch. XXII. In prison they were fed for a year by the Sangreal. The wicked king repented, and died, and Galahad was made king. Galahad died and his soul was borne to heaven by angels, and a hand was seen to bear away the Sangreal and the spear. "Sithen was there never any man so hardy to say that he had seen the Sangreal."

Ch. XXIII. Sir Perceval and Sir Bors made great sorrow for Sir Galahad.

Sir Perceval entered an hermitage, and lived for a year and two months a full holy life, and then passed out of this world.

Sir Bors returned to England, to King Arthur and to Sir Launcelot.

VII. ANALYSIS OF TENNYSON'S POEM.

1. Lines 1-44, Introduction. Almost entirely Tennyson's.
2. ll. 45-67. Origin of the Grail. Cf. R. de Borron's *Joseph of Aramathie* and *Le Grand Saint Graal* (I. 1. B., above).
3. ll. 68-165. Sir Percivale's sister and Sir Galahad. Cf. Malory, Bk. XVII. Chs. II.-XI. Tennyson's story is here very little dependent upon the older versions.
4. ll. 166-360. The vow of the knights and their departure. Cf. Malory, Bk. XIII. Chs. I.-VIII., especially VII.-VIII. Cf. VI. above, and notes on ll. 179 and 350, below.
5. ll. 361-457. Percivale's adventures. Cf. Malory, Bk. XIV. Chs. III.-X. This passage is almost wholly new in Tennyson's story.
6. ll. 458-539. Percivale and Galahad: Galahad's achievement of the quest. Cf. Malory, Bk. XVII. Chs. XXII.-XXIII. Almost entirely Tennyson's creation.
7. ll. 540-631. Incident in Percivale's story. Not closely paralleled in the old stories.
8. ll. 632-707. The story of Sir Bors. Cf. Malory, Bk. XVI. Chs. VI.-XVII. There is almost no likeness between Malory's and Tennyson's treatment of the story of Sir Bors. Cf. VI., above, pp. 51-57.
9. ll. 708-737. The return of the knights. Cf. Malory, Bk. XVII. Ch. XVII.
10. ll. 738-747. The story of Gawaine. Cf. Malory, Bk. XVI. Chs. I.-V.; Bk. XVIII. Ch. I. Tennyson's Gawaine is very unlike Malory's. See App. I., below.
11. ll. 748-849. The story of Lancelot. Cf. Malory, Bk. XIII. Chs. XVII.-XX.; Bk. XV.; Bk. XVII. Chs. XIII.-XVII.
12. ll. 850-916. The address of the king. Tennyson's invention.

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- see Newell : *King Arthur and the Table Round*. Vol. II. pp. 1-97. Translation of portions of Chrestien's poem.
2. *Joseph d'Arimathie*.
- a. A fragmentary poem, by Robert de Borron.
- (1) French.
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- see Furnivall : *Seynt Graal*. 2 vols. London, 1861-1863. Vol. I. App.
- (2) Middle English Translation : *Joseph of Arimathie*.
- see Skeat, W. W., an alliterative poem written about 1380. E. E. Text Sc., 44. 1871.
- b. Prose version. French.
- see Hucher, E. : *Le Saint Graal*. Le Mans. 1875-1878. 3 vols. Vol. I. pp. 1-28.
3. *Perceval*. French prose romance.
- see Hucher (above), Vol. I. pp. 415-506. Called *The Didot Perceval*.
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- see Hucher : *Le Saint Graal* (above), Vols. II.-III.
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NOTE.—There are two Perceval romances which do not tell the story of the Holy Grail. These are: (1) *Peredur ab Ewrawc*, a Welsh tale, (see Lady Guest's *Mabinogion*, Vol. I.); and (2) a Middle English metrical romance, *Perceval of Galles*. See *The Thornton Romances*, edited by J. O. Halliwell. Camden Sc. London, 1844.

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THE HOLY GRAIL.



THE HOLY GRAIL.

The text is that of the London Macmillan edition, 1899. The works of Alfred Lord Tennyson, in twelve volumes. Vol. IV. pp. 156-190.

FROM noiseful arms, and acts of prowess done
In tournament or tilt, Sir Percivale,
Whom Arthur and his knighthood call'd The Pure,
Had pass'd into the silent life of prayer,
Praise, fast, and alms; and leaving for the cowl 5
The helmet in an abbey far away .
From Camelot, there, and not long after, died.

And one, a fellow-monk among the rest,
Ambrosius, loved him much beyond the rest,
And honour'd him, and wrought into his heart 10
A way by love that waken'd love within,
To answer that which came: and as they sat
Beneath a world-old yew-tree, darkening half
The cloisters, on a gustful April morn
That puff'd the swaying branches into smoke 15
Above them, ere the summer when he died,
The monk Ambrosius question'd Percivale:

“O brother, I have seen this yew-tree smoke,
Spring after spring, for half a hundred years:
For never have I known the world without, 20
Nor ever stray'd beyond the pale: but thee,
When first thou camest — such a courtesy
Spake thro' the limbs and in the voice — I knew

For one of those who eat in Arthur's hall ;
 For good ye are and bad, and like to coins, 25
 Some true, some light, but every one of you
 Stamp'd with the image of the King ; and now
 Tell me, what drove thee from the Table Round,
 My brother ? was it earthly passion crost ?”

“Nay,” said the knight ; “for no such passion mine. 30
 But the sweet vision of the Holy Grail
 Drove me from all vainglories, rivalries,
 And earthly heats that spring and sparkle out
 Among us in the jousts, while women watch
 Who wins, who falls ; and waste the spiritual strength 35
 Within us, better offer'd up to Heaven.”

To whom the monk : “The Holy Grail !— I trust
 We are green in Heaven's eyes ; but here too much
 We moulder — as to things without I mean —
 Yet one of your own knights, a guest of ours, 40
 Told us of this in our refectory,
 But spake with such a sadness and so low
 We heard not half of what he said. What is it ?
 The phantom of a cup that comes and goes ?”

“Nay, monk ! what phantom ?” answer'd Percivale. 45
 “The cup, the cup itself, from which our Lord
 Drank at the last sad supper with his own.
 This, from the blessed land of Aromat —
 After the day of darkness, when the dead
 Went wandering o'er Moriah — the good saint, 50
 Arimathæan Joseph, journeying brought
 To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn
 Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our Lord.
 And there awhile it bode ; and if a man
 Could touch or see it, he was heal'd at once, 55
 By faith, of all his ills. But then the times

Grew to such evil that the holy cup
Was caught away to Heaven, and disappear'd."

To whom the monk: "From our old books I know
That Joseph came of old to Glastonbury, 60
And there the heathen Prince, Arviragus,
Gave him an isle of marsh whereon to build;
And there he built with wattles from the marsh
A little lonely church in days of yore,
For so they say, these books of ours, but seem 65
Mute of this miracle, far as I have read.
But who first saw the holy thing to-day?"

"A woman," answer'd Percivale, "a nun,
And one no further off in blood from me
Than sister; and if ever holy maid 70
With knees of adoration wore the stone,
A holy maid; tho' never maiden glow'd,
But that was in her earlier maidenhood,
With such a fervent flame of human love,
Which being rudely blunted, glanced and shot 75
Only to holy things; to prayer and praise
She gave herself, to fast and alms. And yet,
Nun as she was, the scandal of the Court,
Sin against Arthur and the Table Round,
And the strange sound of an adulterous race, 80
Across the iron grating of her cell
Beat, and she pray'd and fasted all the more.

"And he to whom she told her sins, or what
Her all but utter whiteness held for sin,
A man well-nigh a hundred winters old, 85
Spake often with her of the Holy Grail,
A legend handed down thro' five or six,
And each of these a hundred winters old,
From our Lord's time. And when King Arthur made

His Table Round, and all men's hearts became 90
 Clean for a season, surely he had thought
 That now the Holy Grail would come again ;
 But sin broke out. Ah, Christ, that it would come,
 And heal the world of all their wickedness !
 ' O Father ! ' ask'd the maiden, ' might it come 95
 To me by prayer and fasting ? ' ' Nay, ' said he,
 ' I know not, for thy heart is pure as snow. '
 And so she pray'd and fasted, till the sun
 Shone, and the wind blew, thro' her, and I thought
 She might have risen and floated when I saw her. 100

" For on a day she sent to speak with me.
 And when she came to speak, behold her eyes
 Beyond my knowing of them, beautiful,
 Beyond all knowing of them, wonderful,
 Beautiful in the light of holiness. 105
 And ' O my brother Percivale, ' she said,
 ' Sweet brother, I have seen the Holy Grail :
 For, waked at dead of night, I heard a sound
 As of a silver horn from o'er the hills
 Blown, and I thought, " It is not Arthur's use 110
 To hunt by moonlight ; " and the slender sound
 As from a distance beyond distance grew
 Coming upon me — O never harp nor horn,
 Nor aught we blow with breath, or touch with hand,
 Was like that music as it came ; and then 115
 Stream'd thro' my cell a cold and silver beam,
 And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail,
 Rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive,
 Till all the white walls of my cell were dyed
 With rosy colours leaping on the wall ; 120
 And then the music faded, and the Grail
 Past, and the beam decay'd, and from the walls
 The rosy quiverings died into the night.

So now the Holy Thing is here again
Among us, brother, fast thou too and pray, 125
And tell thy brother knights to fast and pray,
That so perchance the vision may be seen
By thee and those, and all the world be heal'd.'

"Then leaving the pale nun, I spake of this
To all men; and myself fasted and pray'd 130
Always, and many among us many a week
Fasted and pray'd even to the uttermost,
Expectant of the wonder that would be.

"And one there was among us, ever moved
Among us in white armour, Galahad. 135
'God make thee good as thou art beautiful,'
Said Arthur, when he dubb'd him knight; and none,
In so young youth, was ever made a knight
Till Galahad; and this Galahad, when he heard
My sister's vision, fill'd me with amazè; 140
His eyes became so like her own, they seem'd
Hers, and himself her brother more than I.

"Sister or brother none had he; but some
Call'd him a son of Lancelot, and some said
Begotten by enchantment — chattering they, 145
Like birds of passage piping up and down,
That gape for flies — we know not whence they come
For when was Lancelot wanderingly lewd?

"But she, the wan sweet maiden, shore away
Clean from her forehead all that wealth of hair 150
Which made a silken mat-work for her feet;
And out of this she plaited broad and long
A strong sword-belt, and wove with silver thread
And crimson in the belt a strange device,
A crimson grail within a silver beam; 155

And saw the bright boy-knight, and bound it on him,
 Saying, 'My knight, my love, my knight of heaven,
 O thou, my love, whose love is one with mine,
 I, maiden, round thee, maiden, bind my belt.
 Go forth, for thou shalt see what I have seen, 160
 And break thro' all, till one will crown thee king
 Far in the spiritual city:' and as she spake
 She sent the deathless passion in her eyes
 Thro' him, and made him hers, and laid her mind
 On him, and he believed in her belief. 165

"Then came a year of miracle: O brother,
 In our great hall there stood a vacant chair,
 Fashion'd by Merlin ere he past away,
 And carven with strange figures; and in and out
 The figures, like a serpent, ran a scroll 170
 Of letters in a tongue no man could read.
 And Merlin call'd it 'The Siege perilous,'
 Perilous for good and ill; 'for there,' he said,
 'No man could sit but he should lose himself:'
 And once by misadventence Merlin sat 175
 In his own chair, and so was lost; but he,
 Galahad, when he heard of Merlin's doom,
 Cried, 'If I lose myself, I save myself!'

"Then on a summer night it came to pass,
 While the great banquet lay along the hall, 180
 That Galahad would sit down in Merlin's chair.

"And all at once, as there we sat, we heard
 A cracking and a riving of the roofs,
 And rending, and a blast, and overhead
 Thunder, and in the thunder was a cry. 185
 And in the blast there smote along the hall
 A beam of light seven times more clear than day:
 And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail

All over cover'd with a luminous cloud,
 And none might see who bare it, and it past. 190
 But every knight beheld his fellow's face
 As in a glory, and all the knights arose,
 And staring each at other like dumb men
 Stood, till I found a voice and sware a vow.

“ I sware a vow before them all, that I, 195
 Because I had not seen the Grail, would ride
 A twelvemonth and a day in quest of it,
 Until I found and saw it, as the nun
 My sister saw it; and Galahad sware the vow,
 And good Sir Bors, our Lancelot's cousin, sware, 200
 And Lancelot sware, and many among the knights,
 And Gawain sware, and louder than the rest.”

Then spake the monk Ambrosius, asking him,
 “ What said the King ? Did Arthur take the vow ? ”

“ Nay, for my lord,” said Percivale, “ the King, 205
 Was not in hall : for early that same day,
 Scaped thro' a cavern from a bandit hold,
 An outraged maiden sprang into the hall
 Crying on help : for all her shining hair
 Was smear'd with earth, and either milky arm 210
 Red-rent with hooks of bramble, and all she wore
 Torn as a sail that leaves the rope is torn
 In tempest : so the King arose and went
 To smoke the scandalous hive of those wild bees
 That made such honey in his realm. Howbeit 215
 Some little of this marvel he too saw,
 Returning o'er the plain that then began
 To darken under Camelot; whence the King
 Look'd up, calling aloud, ‘ Lo, there ! the roofs
 Of our great hall are roll'd in thunder-smoke ! 220

Pray Heaven, they be not smitten by the bolt.
 For dear to Arthur was that hall of ours,
 As having there so oft with all his knights
 Feasted, and as the stateliest under heaven.

“O brother, had you known our mighty hall, 225
 Which Merlin built for Arthur long ago!
 For all the sacred mount of Camelot,
 And all the dim rich city, roof by roof,
 Tower after tower, spire beyond spire,
 By grove, and garden-lawn, and rushing brook, 230
 Climbs to the mighty hall that Merlin built.
 And four great zones of sculpture, set betwixt
 With many a mystic symbol, gird the hall:
 And in the lowest beasts are slaying men,
 And in the second men are slaying beasts, 235
 And on the third are warriors, perfect men,
 And on the fourth are men with growing wings,
 And over all one statue in the mould
 Of Arthur, made by Merlin, with a crown,
 And peak'd wings pointed to the Northern Star. 240
 And eastward fronts the statue, and the crown
 And both the wings are made of gold, and flame
 At sunrise till the people in far fields,
 Wasted so often by the heathen hordes,
 Behold it, crying, ‘We have still a King.’ 245

“And, brother, had you known our hall within,
 Broader and higher than any in all the lands!
 Where twelve great windows blazon Arthur's wars,
 And all the light that falls upon the board
 Streams thro' the twelve great battles of our King. 250
 Nay, one there is, and at the eastern end,
 Wealthy with wandering lines of mount and mere,
 Where Arthur finds the brand Excalibur.

And also one to the west, and counter to it,
 And blank : and who shall blazon it? when and how? — 255
 O there, perchance, when all our wars are done,
 The brand Excalibur will be cast away.

“So to this hall full quickly rode the King,
 In horror lest the work by Merlin wrought,
 Dreamlike, should on the sudden vanish, wrapt 260
 In unremorseful folds of rolling fire.
 And in he rode and up I glanced, and saw
 The golden dragon sparkling over all :
 And many of those who burnt the hold, their arms 264
 Hack'd and their foreheads grimed with smoke, and sear'd,
 Follow'd, and in among bright faces, ours,
 Full of the vision, prest : and then the King
 Spake to me, being nearest, ‘Percivale,’
 (Because the hall was all in tumult — some
 Vowing, and some protesting), ‘what is this?’ 270

“O brother, when I told him what had chanced,
 My sister's vision, and the rest, his face
 Darken'd, as I have seen it more than once,
 When some brave deed seem'd to be done in vain,
 Darken ; and ‘Woe is me, my knights,’ he cried, 275
 ‘Had I been here, ye had not sworn the vow.’
 Bold was mine answer, ‘Had thyself been here,
 My King, thou wouldst have sworn.’ ‘Yea, yea,’ said he,
 ‘Art thou so bold and hast not seen the Grail?’

“‘Nay, lord, I heard the sound, I saw the light, 280
 But since I did not see the Holy Thing,
 I swear a vow to follow it till I saw.’

“Then when he ask'd us, knight by knight, if any
 Had seen it, all their answers were as one :
 ‘Nay, lord, and therefore have we sworn our vows.’ 285

“‘Lo now,’ said Arthur, ‘have ye seen a cloud?
What go ye into the wilderness to see?’

“Then Galahad on the sudden, and in a voice
Shrilling along the hall to Arthur call’d,
‘But I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail, 290
I saw the Holy Grail and heard a cry —
“O Galahad, and O Galahad, follow me.”’

“‘Ah, Galahad, Galahad,’ said the King, ‘for such
As thou art is the vision, not for these.
The holy nun and thou have seen a sign — 295
Holier is none, my Percivale, than she —
A sign to main this Order which I made.
But ye, that follow but the leader’s bell’
(Brother, the King was hard upon his knights)
‘Taliessin is our fullest throat of song, 300
And one hath sung and all the dumb will sing.
Lancelot is Lancelot, and hath overborne
Five knights at once, and every younger knight,
Unproven, holds himself as Lancelot,
Till overborne by one, he learns — and ye, 305
What are ye? Galahads? — no, nor Percivales’
(For thus it pleased the King to range me close
After Sir Galahad); ‘nay,’ said he, ‘but men
With strength and will to right the wrong’d, of power
To lay the sudden heads of violence flat, 310
Knights that in twelve great battles splash’d and dyed
The strong White Horse in his own heathen blood —
But one hath seen, and all the blind will see.
Go, since your vows are sacred, being made:
Yet — for ye know the cries of all my realm 315
Pass thro’ this hall — how often, O my knights,
Your places being vacant at my side,
This chance of noble deeds will come and go
Unchallenged, while ye follow wandering fires

Lost in the quagmire! Many of you, yea most, 320
 Return no more: ye think I show myself
 Too dark a prophet: come now, let us meet
 The morrow morn once more in one full field
 Of gracious pastime, that once more the King,
 Before ye leave him for this Quest, may count 325
 The yet-unbroken strength of all his knights,
 Rejoicing in that Order which he made.'

"So when the sun broke next from under ground,
 All the great table of our Arthur closed
 And clash'd in such a tourney and so full, 330
 So many lances broken — never yet
 Had Camelot seen the like, since Arthur came;
 And I myself and Galahad, for a strength
 Was in us from the vision, overthrew
 So many knights that all the people cried, 335
 And almost burst the barriers in their heat,
 Shouting, 'Sir Galahad and Sir Percivale!'

"But when the next day brake from under ground —
 O brother, had you known our Camelot,
 Built by old kings, age after age, so old 340
 The King himself had fears that it would fall,
 So strange, and rich, and dim; for where the roofs
 Totter'd toward each other in the sky,
 Met foreheads all along the street of those
 Who watch'd us pass; and lower, and where the long 345
 Rich galleries, lady-laden, weigh'd the necks
 Of dragons clinging to the crazy walls,
 Thicker than drops from thunder, showers of flowers
 Fell as we past; and men and boys astride
 On wyvern, lion, dragon, griffin, swan, 350
 At all the corners, named us each by name,
 Calling 'God speed!' but in the ways below
 The knights and ladies wept, and rich and poor

Wept, and the King himself could hardly speak
For grief, and all in middle street the Queen, 355
Who rode by Lancelot, wail'd and shriek'd aloud,
'This madness has come on us for our sins.'
So to the Gate of the three Queens we came,
Where Arthur's wars are render'd mystically,
And thence departed every one his way. 360

"And I was lifted up in heart, and thought
Of all my late-shown prowess in the lists,
How my strong lance had beaten down the knights,
So many and famous names; and never yet
Had Heaven appear'd so blue, nor earth so green, 365
For all my blood danced in me, and I knew
That I should light upon the Holy Grail.

"Thereafter, the dark warning of our King,
That most of us would follow wandering fires,
Came like a driving gloom across my mind. 370
Then every evil word I had spoken once,
And every evil thought I had thought of old,
And every evil deed I ever did,
Awoke and cried, 'This Quest is not for thee.'
And lifting up mine eyes, I found myself 375
Alone, and in a land of sand and thorns,
And I was thirsty even unto death;
And I, too, cried, 'This Quest is not for thee.'

"And on I rode, and when I thought my thirst
Would slay me, saw deep lawns, and then a brook, 380
With one sharp rapid, where the crisping white
Play'd ever back upon the sloping wave,
And took both ear and eye; and o'er the brook
Were apple-trees, and apples by the brook
Fallen, and on the lawns. 'I will rest here,' 385
I said, 'I am not worthy of the Quest;'

But even while I drank the brook, and ate
The goodly apples, all these things at once
Fell into dust, and I was left alone,
And thirsting, in a land of sand and thorns. 390

“ And then behold a woman at a door
Spinning; and fair the house whereby she sat,
And kind the woman’s eyes and innocent,
And all her bearing gracious; and she rose
Opening her arms to meet me, as who should say, 395
‘ Rest here; ’ but when I touch’d her, lo! she, too,
Fell into dust and nothing, and the house
Became no better than a broken shed,
And in it a dead babe; and also this
Fell into dust, and I was left alone. 400

“ And on I rode, and greater was my thirst.
Then flash’d a yellow gleam across the world,
And where it smote the plowshare in the field,
The plowman left his plowing, and fell down
Before it; where it glitter’d on her pail, 405
The milkmaid left her milking, and fell down
Before it, and I knew not why, but thought
‘ The sun is rising, ’ tho’ the sun had risen.
Then was I ware of one that on me moved
In golden armour with a crown of gold 410
About a casque all jewels; and his horse
In golden armour jewell’d everywhere:
And on the splendour came, flashing me blind;
And seem’d to me the Lord of all the world,
Being so huge. But when I thought he meant 415
To crush me, moving on me, lo! he, too,
Open’d his arms to embrace me as he came,
And up I went and touch’d him, and he, too,
Fell into dust, and I was left alone
And wearying in a land of sand and thorns. 420

"And I rode on and found a mighty hill,
 And on the top, a city wall'd: the spires
 Prick'd with incredible pinnacles into heaven.
 And by the gateway stirr'd a crowd; and these
 Cried to me climbing, 'Welcome, Percivale! 425
 Thou mightiest and thou purest among men!'
 And glad was I and clomb, but found at top
 No man, nor any voice. And thence I past
 Far thro' a ruinous city, and I saw
 That man had once dwelt there; but there I found 430
 Only one man of an exceeding age.
 'Where is that goodly company,' said I,
 'That so cried out upon me?' and he had
 Scarce any voice to answer, and yet gasp'd,
 'Whence and what art thou?' and even as he spoke 435
 Fell into dust, and disappear'd, and I
 Was left alone once more, and cried in grief,
 'Lo, if I find the Holy Grail itself
 And touch it, it will crumble into dust.'

"And thence I dropt into a lowly vale, 440
 Low as the hill was high, and where the vale
 Was lowest, found a chapel, and thereby
 A holy hermit in a hermitage,
 To whom I told my phantoms, and he said:

"'O son, thou hast not true humility, 445
 The highest virtue, mother of them all;
 For when the Lord of all things made Himself
 Naked of glory for His mortal change,
 "Take thou my robe," she said, "for all is thine,"
 And all her form shone forth with sudden light 450
 So that the angels were amazed, and she
 Follow'd Him down, and like a flying star
 Led on the gray-hair'd wisdom of the east;
 But her thou hast not known: for what is this

Thou thoughtest of thy prowess and thy sins ? 455
 Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself
 As Galahad.' When the hermit made an end,
 In silver armour suddenly Galahad shone
 Before us, and against the chapel door
 Laid lance, and enter'd, and we knelt in prayer. 460
 And there the hermit slaked my burning thirst,
 And at the sacring of the mass I saw
 The holy elements alone ; but he,
 'Saw ye no more ? I, Galahad, saw the Grail,
 The Holy Grail, descend upon the shrine : 465
 I saw the fiery face as of a child
 That smote itself into the bread, and went ;
 And hither am I come ; and never yet
 Hath what thy sister taught me first to see,
 This Holy Thing, fail'd from my side, nor come 470
 Cover'd, but moving with me night and day,
 Fainter by day, but always in the night
 Blood-red, and sliding down the blacken'd marsh
 Blood-red, and on the naked mountain top
 Blood-red, and in the sleeping mere below 475
 Blood-red. And in the strength of this I rode,
 Shattering all evil customs everywhere,
 And past thro' Pagan realms, and made them mine,
 And clash'd with Pagan hordes, and bore them down,
 And broke thro' all, and in the strength of this 480
 Come victor. But my time is hard at hand,
 And hence I go ; and one will crown me king
 Far in the spiritual city ; and come thou, too,
 For thou shalt see the vision when I go.'

" While thus he spake, his eye, dwelling on mine, 485
 Drew me, with power upon me, till I grew
 One with him, to believe as he believed.
 Then, when the day began to wane, we went.

" There rose a hill that none but man could climb,
 Scarr'd with a hundred wintry water-courses — 490
 Storm at the top, and when we gain'd it, storm
 Round us and death; for every moment glanced
 His silver arms and gloom'd: so quick and thick
 The lightnings here and there to left and right
 Struck, till the dry old trunks about us, dead, 495
 Yea, rotten with a hundred years of death,
 Sprang into fire: and at the base we found
 On either hand, as far as eye could see,
 A great black swamp and of an evil smell,
 Part black, part whiten'd with the bones of men, 500
 Not to be crost, save that some ancient king
 Had built a way, where, link'd with many a bridge,
 A thousand piers ran into the great Sea.
 And Galahad fled along them bridge by bridge,
 And every bridge as quickly as he crost 505
 Sprang into fire and vanish'd, tho' I yearn'd
 To follow; and thrice above him all the heavens
 Open'd and blazed with thunder such as seem'd
 Shoutings of all the sons of God: and first
 At once I saw him far on the great Sea, 510
 In silver-shining armour starry-clear;
 And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
 Clothed in white samite or a luminous cloud.
 And with exceeding swiftness ran the boat,
 If boat it were — I saw not whence it came. 515
 And when the heavens open'd and blazed again
 Roaring, I saw him like a silver star —
 And had he set the sail, or had the boat
 Become a living creature clad with wings?
 And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung 520
 Redder than any rose, a joy to me,
 For now I knew the veil had been withdrawn.
 Then in a moment when they blazed again

Opening, I saw the least of little stars
 Down on the waste, and straight beyond the star 525
 I saw the spiritual city and all her spires
 And gateways in a glory like one pearl —
 No larger, tho' the goal of all the saints —
 Strike from the sea; and from the star there shot
 A rose-red sparkle to the city, and there 530
 Dwelt, and I knew it was the Holy Grail,
 Which never eyes on earth again shall see.
 Then fell the floods of heaven drowning the deep.
 And how my feet recrost the deathful ridge
 No memory in me lives; but that I touch'd 535
 The chapel-doors at dawn I know; and thence
 Taking my war-horse from the holy man,
 Glad that no phantom vex't me more, return'd
 To whence I came, the gate of Arthur's wars."

"O brother," ask'd Ambrosius, — "for in sooth 540
 These ancient books — and they would win thee — teem,
 Only I find not there this Holy Grail,
 With miracles and marvels like to these,
 Not all unlike; which oftentime I read,
 Who read but on my breviary with ease, 545
 Till my head swims; and then go forth and pass
 Down to the little thorpe that lies so close,
 And almost plaster'd like a martin's nest
 To these old walls — and mingle with our folk;
 And knowing every honest face of theirs 550
 As well as ever shepherd knew his sheep,
 And every homely secret in their hearts,
 Delight myself with gossip and old wives,
 And ills and aches, and teethings, lyings-in,
 And mirthful sayings, children of the place, 555
 That have no meaning half a league away:
 Or lulling random squabbles when they rise,

Chafferings and chatterings at the market-cross,
 Rejoice, small man, in this small world of mine,
 Yea, even in their hens and in their eggs — 560
 O brother, saving this Sir Galahad,
 Came ye on none but phantoms in your quest,
 No man, no woman ?”

Then Sir Percivale :

“ All men, to one so bound by such a vow,
 And women were as phantoms. O, my brother, 565
 Why wilt thou shame me to confess to thee
 How far I falter'd from my quest and vow ?
 For after I had lain so many nights,
 A bedmate of the snail and eft and snake,
 In grass and burdock, I was changed to wan 570
 And meagre, and the vision had not come ;
 And then I chanced upon a goodly town
 With one great dwelling in the middle of it ;
 Thither I made, and there was I disarm'd
 By maidens each as fair as any flower : 575
 But when they led me into hall, behold,
 The Princess of that castle was the one,
 Brother, and that one only, who had ever
 Made my heart leap ; for when I moved of old
 A slender page about her father's hall, 580
 And she a slender maiden, all my heart
 Went after her with longing : yet we twain
 Had never kiss'd a kiss, or vow'd a vow.
 And now I came upon her once again,
 And one had wedded her, and he was dead, 585
 And all his land and wealth and state were hers.
 And while I tarried, every day she set
 A banquet richer than the day before
 By me ; for all her longing and her will
 Was toward me as of old ; till one fair morn, 590

I walking to and fro beside a stream
 That flash'd across her orchard underneath
 Her castle-walls, she stole upon my walk,
 And calling me the greatest of all knights,
 Embraced me, and so kiss'd me the first time, 595
 And gave herself and all her wealth to me.
 Then I remember'd Arthur's warning word,
 That most of us would follow wandering fires,
 And the Quest faded in my heart. Anon,
 The heads of all her people drew to me, 600
 With supplication both of knees and tongue :
 ' We have heard of thee : thou art our greatest knight,
 Our Lady says it, and we well believe:
 Wed thou our Lady, and rule over us,
 And thou shalt be as Arthur in our land.' 605
 O me, my brother ! but one night my vow
 Burnt me within, so that I rose and fled,
 But wail'd and wept, and hated mine own self,
 And ev'n the Holy Quest, and all but her ;
 Then after I was join'd with Galahad 610
 Cared not for her, nor anything upon earth."

Then said the monk, " Poor men, when yule is cold,
 Must be content to sit by little fires.
 And this am I, so that ye care for me
 Ever so little ; yea, and blest be Heaven 615
 That brought thee here to this poor house of ours
 Where all the brethren are so hard, to warm
 My cold heart with a friend : but O the pity
 To find thine own first love once more — to hold,
 Hold her a wealthy bride within thine arms, 620
 Or all but hold, and then — cast her aside,
 Foregoing all her sweetness, like a weed.
 For we that want the warmth of double life,
 We that are plagued with dreams of something sweet

Beyond all sweetness in a life so rich, — 625
 Ah, blessed Lord, I speak too earthlywise,
 Seeing I never stray'd beyond the cell,
 But live like an old badger in his earth,
 With earth about him everywhere, despite
 All fast and penance. Saw ye none beside, 630
 None of your knights ? ”

“ Yea so,” said Percivale :

“ One night my pathway swerving east, I saw
 The pelican on the casque of our Sir Bors
 All in the middle of the rising moon :
 And toward him spurr'd, and hail'd him, and he me, 635
 And each made joy of either ; then he ask'd
 ‘ Where is he ? hast thou seen him — Lancelot ? — Once,’
 Said good Sir Bors, ‘ he dash'd across me — mad,
 And maddening what he rode : and when I cried,
 “ Ridest thou then so hotly on a quest 640
 So holy,” Lancelot shouted, “ Stay me not !
 I have been the sluggard, and I ride apace,
 For now there is a lion in the way.”
 So vanish'd.’

“ Then Sir Bors had ridden on
 Softly, and sorrowing for our Lancelot, 645
 Because his former madness, once the talk
 And scandal of our table, had return'd ;
 For Lancelot's kith and kin so worship him
 That ill to him is ill to them ; to Bors
 Beyond the rest : he well had been content 650
 Not to have seen, so Lancelot might have seen,
 The Holy Cup of healing ; and, indeed,
 Being so clouded with his grief and love,
 Small heart was his after the Holy Quest :
 If God would send the vision, well : if not, 655
 The Quest and he were in the hands of Heaven.

"And then, with small adventure met, Sir Bors
 Rode to the lonest tract of all the realm,
 And found a people there among their crags,
 Our race and blood, a remnant that were left 660
 Paynim amid their circles, and the stones
 They pitch up straight to heaven: and their wise men
 Were strong in that old magic which can trace
 The wandering of the stars, and scoff'd at him
 And this high Quest as at a simple thing: 665
 Told him he follow'd — almost Arthur's words —
 A mocking fire: ' what other fire than he,
 Whereby the blood beats, and the blossom blows,
 And the sea rolls, and all the world is warm'd ?'
 And when his answer chafed them, the rough crowd, 670
 Hearing he had a difference with their priests,
 Seized him, and bound and plunged him into a cell
 Of great piled stones; and lying bounden there
 In darkness thro' innumerable hours
 He heard the hollow-ringing heavens sweep 675
 Over him till by miracle — what else ? —
 Heavy as it was, a great stone slipt and fell
 Such as no wind could move: and thro' the gap
 Glimmer'd the streaming scud: then came a night
 Still as the day was loud; and thro' the gap 680
 The seven clear stars of Arthur's Table Round —
 For, brother, so one night, because they roll
 Thro' such a round in heaven, we named the stars,
 Rejoicing in ourselves and in our King —
 And these, like bright eyes of familiar friends, 685
 In on him shone: ' And then to me, to me,'
 Said good Sir Bors, ' beyond all hopes of mine,
 Who scarce had pray'd or ask'd it for myself —
 Across the seven clear stars — O grace to me —
 In colour like the fingers of a hand 690
 Before a burning taper, the sweet Grail

Glided and past, and close upon it peal'd
 A sharp quick thunder.' Afterwards a maid,
 Who kept our holy faith among her kin
 In secret, entering, loosed and let him go." 695

To whom the monk: "And I remember now
 That pelican on the casque: Sir Bors it was
 Who spake so low and sadly at our board;
 And mighty reverent at our grace was he:
 A square-set man and honest; and his eyes, 700
 An out-door sign of all the warmth within,
 Smiled with his lips — a smile beneath a cloud,
 But heaven had meant it for a sunny one:
 Ay, ay, Sir Bors, who else? But when ye reach'd
 The city, found ye all your knights return'd, 705
 Or was there sooth in Arthur's prophecy,
 Tell me, and what said each, and what the King?"

Then answer'd Percivale: "And that can I,
 Brother, and truly; since the living words
 Of so great men as Lancelot and our King 710
 Pass not from door to door and out again,
 But sit within the house. O, when we reach'd
 The city, our horses stumbling as they trode
 On heaps of ruin, hornless unicorns,
 Crack'd basilisks, and splinter'd cockatrices, 715
 And shatter'd talbots, which had left the stones
 Raw, that they fell from, brought us to the hall.

"And there sat Arthur on the daïs-throne,
 And those that had gone out upon the Quest,
 Wasted and worn, and but a tithe of them, 720
 And those that had not, stood before the King,
 Who, when he saw me, rose, and bad me hail,
 Saying, 'A welfare in thine eye reproves
 Our fear of some disastrous chance for thee

On hill, or plain, at sea, or flooding ford. 725
 So fierce a gale made havoc here of late
 Among the strange devices of our kings ;
 Yea, shook this newer, stronger hall of ours,
 And from the statue Merlin moulded for us
 Half-wrench'd a golden wing ; but now — the Quest, 730
 This vision — hast thou seen the Holy Cup,
 That Joseph brought of old to Glastonbury ?'

“ So when I told him all thyself hast heard,
 Ambrosius, and my fresh but fixt resolve
 To pass away into the quiet life, 735
 He answer'd not, but, sharply turning, ask'd
 Of Gawain, ‘ Gawain, was this Quest for thee ?’

“ ‘ Nay, lord,’ said Gawain, ‘ not for such as I.
 Therefore I communed with a saintly man,
 Who made me sure the Quest was not for me ; 740
 For I was much aweari'd of the Quest :
 But found a silk pavilion in a field,
 And merry maidens in it ; and then this gale
 Tore my pavilion from the tenting-pin,
 And blew my merry maidens all about 745
 With all discomfort ; yea, and but for this,
 My twelvemonth and a day were pleasant to me.’

“ He ceased ; and Arthur turn'd to whom at first
 He saw not, for Sir Bors, on entering, push'd
 Athwart the throng to Lancelot, caught his hand, 750
 Held it, and there, half-hidden by him, stood,
 Until the King espied him, saying to him,
 ‘ Hail, Bors ! if ever loyal man and true
 Could see it, thou hast seen the Grail ;’ and Bors,
 ‘ Ask me not, for I may not speak of it : 755
 I saw it ;’ and the tears were in his eyes.

"Then there remain'd but Lancelot, for the rest
 Spake but of sundry perils in the storm;
 Perhaps, like him of Cana in Holy Writ,
 Our Arthur kept his best until the last; 760
 'Thou, too, my Lancelot,' ask'd the King, 'my friend,
 Our mightiest, hath this Quest avail'd for thee?'

"'Our mightiest!' answer'd Lancelot, with a groan;
 'O King!' — and when he paused, methought I spied 765
 A dying fire of madness in his eyes —
 'O King, my friend, if friend of thine I be,
 Happier are those that welter in their sin,
 Swine in the mud, that cannot see for slime,
 Slime of the ditch: but in me lived a sin 770
 So strange, of such a kind, that all of pure,
 Noble, and knightly in me twined and clung
 Round that one sin, until the wholesome flower
 And poisonous grew together, each as each,
 Not to be pluck'd asunder; and when thy knights
 Sware, I swear with them only in the hope 775
 That could I touch or see the Holy Grail
 They might be pluck'd asunder. Then I spake
 To one most holy saint, who wept and said,
 That save they could be pluck'd asunder, all
 My quest were but in vain; to whom I vow'd 780
 That I would work according as he will'd
 And forth I went, and while I yearn'd and strove
 To tear the twain asunder in my heart,
 My madness came upon me as of old,
 And whipt me into waste fields far away; 785
 There was I beaten down by little men,
 Mean knights, to whom the moving of my sword
 And shadow of my spear had been enow
 To scare them from me once; and then I came
 All in my folly to the naked shore, 790

Wide flats, where nothing but coarse grasses grew ;
 But such a blast, my King, began to blow,
 So loud a blast along the shore and sea,
 Ye could not hear the waters for the blast,
 Tho' heapt in mounds and ridges all the sea 795
 Drove like a cataract, and all the sand
 Swept like a river, and the clouded heavens
 Were shaken with the motion and the sound.
 And blackening in the sea-foam sway'd a boat
 Half-swallow'd in it, anchor'd with a chain ; 800
 And in my madness to myself I said,
 "I will embark and I will lose myself,
 And in the great sea wash away my sin."
 I burst the chain, I sprang into the boat.
 Seven days I drove along the dreary deep, 805
 And with me drove the moon and all the stars ;
 And the wind fell and on the seventh night
 I heard the shingle grinding in the surge,
 And felt the boat shock earth, and looking up,
 Behold, the enchanted towers of Carbonek, 810
 A castle like a rock upon a rock,
 With chasm-like portals open to the sea,
 And steps that met the breaker ! there was none
 Stood near it but a lion on each side
 That kept the entry, and the moon was full. 815
 Then from the boat I leapt, and up the stairs.
 There drew my sword. With sudden flaring manes
 Those two great beasts rose upright like a man,
 Each gript a shoulder, and I stood between ;
 And, when I would have smitten them, heard a voice, 820
 "Doubt not, go forward ; if thou doubt, the beasts
 Will tear thee piecemeal." Then with violence
 The sword was dash'd from out my hand, and fell.
 And up into the sounding hall I past ;
 But nothing in the sounding hall I saw, 825

No bench nor table, painting on the wall
 Or shield of knight; only the rounded moon
 Thro' the tall oriel on the rolling sea.
 But always in the quiet house I heard,
 Clear as a lark, high o'er me as a lark, 830
 A sweet voice singing in the topmost tower
 To the eastward: up I climb'd a thousand steps
 With pain: as in a dream I seem'd to climb
 For ever: at the last I reach'd a door,
 A light was in the crannies, and I heard, 835
 "Glory and joy and honour to our Lord
 And to the Holy Vessel of the Grail."
 Then in my madness I essay'd the door;
 It gave; and thro' a stormy glare, a heat
 As from a seventimes-heated furnace, I, 840
 Blasted and burnt, and blinded as I was,
 With such a fierceness that I swoon'd away —
 O, yet methought I saw the Holy Grail,
 All pall'd in crimson samite, and around
 Great angels, awful shapes, and wings and eyes. 845
 And but for all my madness and my sin,
 And then my swooning, I had sworn I saw
 That which I saw; but what I saw was veil'd
 And cover'd; and this Quest was not for me.'

"So speaking, and here ceasing, Lancelot left 850
 The hall long silent, till Sir Gawain — nay,
 Brother, I need not tell thee foolish words, —
 A reckless and irreverent knight was he,
 Now bolden'd by the silence of his King, —
 Well, I will tell thee: 'O King, my liege,' he said, 855
 'Hath Gawain fail'd in any quest of thine?
 When have I stinted stroke in foughten field?
 But as for thine, my good friend Percivale,
 Thy holy nun and thou have driven men mad,

Yea, made our mightiest madder than our least. 860
 But by mine eyes and by mine ears I swear,
 I will be deafer than the blue-eyed cat,
 And thrice as blind as any noonday owl,
 To holy virgins in their ecstasies,
 Henceforward.'

“ ‘Deafer,’ said the blameless King, 865
 ‘Gawain, and blinder unto holy things
 Hope not to make thyself by idle vows,
 Being too blind to have desire to see.
 But if indeed there came a sign from heaven,
 Blessed are Bors, Lancelot and Percivale, 870
 For these have seen according to their sight.
 For every fiery prophet in old times,
 And all the sacred madness of the bard,
 When God made music thro’ them, could but speak
 His music by the framework and the chord ; 875
 And as ye saw it ye have spoken truth.

“ ‘Nay — but thou errest, Lancelot : never yet
 Could all of true and noble in knight and man
 Twine round one sin, whatever it might be,
 With such a closeness, but apart there grew, 880
 Save that he were the swine thou spakest of,
 Some root of knighthood and pure nobleness ;
 Whereto see thou, that it may bear its flower.

“ ‘And spake I not too truly, O my knights ?
 Was I too dark a prophet when I said 885
 To those who went upon the Holy Quest,
 That most of them would follow wandering fires,
 Lost in the quagmire ? — lost to me and gone,
 And left me gazing at a barren board,
 And a lean Order — scarce return’d a tithe — 890
 And out of those to whom the vision came

My greatest hardly will believe he saw ;
 Another hath beheld it afar off,
 And leaving human wrongs to right themselves,
 Cares but to pass into the silent life. 895
 And one hath had the vision face to face,
 And now his chair desires him here in vain,
 However they may crown him elsewhere.

“ ‘ And some among you held, that if the King
 Had seen the sight he would have sworn the vow : 900
 Not easily, seeing that the King must guard
 That which he rules, and is but as the hind
 To whom a space of land is given to plow,
 Who may not wander from the allotted field
 Before his work be done ; but, being done, 905
 Let visions of the night or of the day
 Come, as they will ; and many a time they come,
 Until this earth he walks on seems not earth,
 This light that strikes his eyeball is not light,
 This air that smites his forehead is not air 910
 But vision — yea, his very hand and foot —
 In moments when he feels he cannot die,
 And knows himself no vision to himself,
 Nor the high God a vision, nor that One
 Who rose again : ye have seen what ye have seen.’ 915

“ So spake the King : I knew not all he meant.”

NOTES.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN NOTES AND APPENDIX.

- Brooke. *Tennyson, his Art and Relation to Modern Life.* By S. A. Brooke.
- G. of M. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannia*.
- Globe. Globe edition of Tennyson's Poems, 1898.
- Hucher. *Le Saint Graal*, 3 vols.
- Lay. Layamon's *Brut*. Sir F. Madden, ed.
- Mal. Malory's *Morte Darthur*.
- Mal. Som. Sommer's edition of the *Morte Darthur*.
- Mem. *Alfred, Lord Tennyson, a Memoir by his Son.*
- Merlin. *Middle English Romance of Merlin.* E. E. Text. Sc., Nos. 10, 24, 36.
- Nen. *Historia Britonum* of Nennius.
- Newell. *King Arthur and the Table Round.* W. W. Newell.
- Nutt. *Studies in the Legend of the Holy Grail.* A. Nutt.
- Potvin. *Le Conte del Graal*, 6 vols., i.e. Chrestien's *Perceval*.
- R. de Mer. The French *Roman de Merlin*, edited by H. O. Sommer.
- Wace. *Wace's Roman de Brut.*

The Title. The Holy Grail. See Introduction above, esp. I. 1, pp. 14-16.

For discussion concerning the meaning of the word "Graal" see Skeat's edition of the English version of *Joseph of Arimathie*, E. E. Text Sc., 44, pp. 36-40. "The word is from the Low Latin *gradale*, or *grasale*, a kind of vessel of wood, earth, or metal, from the Latin *cratella*, diminutive of *crater* or *cratera*. At first the *seynt graal* was the Holy Dish used at the Last Supper . . . given by Pilate to Joseph . . . used by Joseph to collect the blood flowing from the five wounds. Later this dish became the *cup* of the Last Supper" (cf. *Holy Grail*, l. 46).

The *Graal* in *Joseph of Arimathie* is so called because it is agreeable to those who look upon it. Ed. Michel, ll. 2657-2678. The same

reason is given in *Le Grand Saint Graal*, where Nasciens, on seeing the Grail, says that everything he has seen before somewhat displeased him, but that this pleases him entirely. Hucher, Vol. II. p. 306.

The early Perceval Romances do not connect the Grail with the cup of the Last Supper. In Wolfram's *Parzival* the Grail is a precious stone.

The Verse. The verse is iambic pentameter blank verse, that is, each line consists of five iambic feet, and there is no rhyme. An iambic foot is composed of two syllables, the stress falling upon the second: From noise | ful arms | and acts | of prow | ess done |. As early as 1834, in the *Morte d'Arthur*, Tennyson had shown himself a master in this the verse of Marlowe, of Shakespeare, and of Milton. Many traits go to make the beauty of Tennyson's blank verse. The student should notice the combinations of vowel and consonant sounds (*i.e.* tone-color), and the variations produced by the shifting of the chief pause (the cæsural pause). This pause may come after any foot in the verse or in the middle of any foot. Many times a verse contains a secondary pause, and occasionally one has no pronounced pause. The frequent change in the position of the pause is an important factor in the varied harmony of the poem. One should notice also that the first foot in a verse is sometimes trochaic (*i.e.* a long syllable followed by a short one), or spondaic (*i.e.* two long syllables), instead of iambic.

Examples of the variety in the pause : —

1. In the middle of first foot, ll. 82, 354, 531.
2. After first foot, ll. 8, 224, 445.
3. Middle of second foot, ll. 18, 705.
4. After second foot, ll. 1, 5, 19, 608.
5. Middle of third foot, l. 53.
6. After third foot, ll. 12, 108, 267.
7. Middle of fourth foot, ll. 103, 135.
8. After fourth foot, ll. 21, 509, 599.
9. Middle of fifth foot, l. 840.
10. No marked pause, ll. 398, 550.

Line 2. "Sir Percivale," cf. Introduction, I. 1, A. "And as soon as he (Galahad) was buried, Sir Percivale yielded him to an hermitage out of the city, and took a religious clothing. And Bors was always with him, but never changed he his secular clothing, for that he purposed him to go again into the realm of Logris (England). Thus a

year and two months lived Sir Percivale in the hermitage, a full holy life, and then passed out of this world." — Mal., Bk. XVII. Ch. XXIII.

Line 3. Arthur, the great British hero, about whom cluster so many legends and romances, is historically a dim figure. There seems no reason to doubt that there was a leader of that name, who fought on the side of the Britons against the Saxons and other tribes at the end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth century. He is first mentioned in the *Historia Britonum*, called the History of Nennius. In Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannæ*, Arthur has grown to a world conqueror, who subdues even Rome and exacts tribute from the Romans. Stories of Arthur grew under many hands. Because fellowship with the Round Table added glory to the most famous knights, stories not originally belonging to the Arthurian group were joined to it. Such are the story of Tristram and the story of the Holy Grail. It is most interesting to trace the growth of the history of King Arthur from the ninth to the thirteenth century :

Nennius, Latin, ninth century. *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, Latin, about 1136. *Wace*, Norman French, 1155. *Layamon*, English, about 1205. *Le Roman de Merlin*, French, probably thirteenth century.

Among the many modern English poems which are, in whole or in part, Arthurian in subject, are Spenser's *Faerie Queene* in the sixteenth century, and, in the nineteenth, William Morris's *The Defence of Guenevere*, *King Arthur's Tomb*, *Sir Galahad*, *A Christmas Mystery*, and *The Chapel in Lyonesse*, Matthew Arnold's *Tristram and Iseult*, Swinburne's *Tristram of Lyonesse* and *The Tale of Balen*, and Bulwer-Lytton's *King Arthur*. Stephen Hawker's poem, *The Quest of the Sangreal*, was earlier than Tennyson's *Idyll*. To these poems may be added the Arthurian dramas of the late Richard Hovey: *The Quest of Merlin*, *The Marriage of Guenevere*, *The Birth of Galahad*, and *Taliesin*, *A Masque*.

Line 7. "Camelot," "Camelot is neither situated in Wales, as Caxton states (preface to *Morte Darthur*, 1485), nor is the English Winchester identical with it. Camel, near South Cadbury, Somerset, is the place where the remains of the old city of Camelot are still to be found." — Mal. Som. Vol. II. p. 157, footnote. Cf. Mal., Bk. II. Ch. XIX. "The Cyte of Camelot that is in English Wynchestre."

In Lonelich's version of the *Grand Saint Graal*, we read how Josephes comes to a city.

"Which was tho clepid Ka Amelot ;
And this the Riichest City was
Of Alle breteygne In Ony plas,

and Ek it was of sweche bounte
That Alle kinges weren crowned there Sekerle. (surely.)
Whiche that weren of paynem londe."

— E. E. Text Sc., *Holy Grail*, p. 206, Ch. XLVII. ll. 17–23. Cf. note on ll. 227–231.

Lines 13–15. In Lady Tennyson's Journal, April, 1868, is the following entry: "There has been a great deal of smoke in the yew trees this year. One day there was such a cloud that it seemed to be a fire in the shrubbery." Lord Hallam Tennyson adds: "It was there that he (Tennyson) wrote the speech of Ambrosius in *The Holy Grail*, with the lines about this 'smoke'; that is, the pollen of the yew blown and scattered by the wind. . . . He would say: 'I made most of *The Holy Grail* walking up and down my field, Maiden's Croft.' In *Memoriam*, Sec. XXXIX., was also written at this time." *Mem.*, Vol. II. Ch. IV. p. 53.

In *Memoriam*, Sec. XXXIX. :—

"Old warder of these buried bones,
And answering now my random stroke
With fruitful cloud and *living smoke*,
Dark yew, that graspest at the stones,

"And dippest toward the dreamless head,
To thee, too, comes the golden hour
When flower is feeling after flower;
But sorrow fixt upon the dead,

"And darkening the dark graves of men,
What whispered from her lying lips?
Thy gloom is kindled at the tips
And passes into gloom again."

This section should be compared with *In Memoriam*, Sec. II., and with Wordsworth's poem, *Yew Trees*.

Line 21. "Nor ever strayed beyond the pale." Pale means the limit of the monastery. Cf. Milton, *Il Penseroso*, l. 176. "To walk the studious cloister's pale."

Line 28. "The Table Round." King Arthur's knights were called the Order of the Round Table, and the Round Table symbolized a fellowship in which none was preferred before another, but all were equal. The Round Table seems to be first mentioned by the French poet Robert Wace, in *Le Roman de Brut*, about 1155. In Layamon's

Brut the making of the Round Table comes about because the knights fought so fiercely for first place that many were wounded, and even slain. Wace, ll. 9994-10007. Lay., ll. 22873-22943. R. de Mer., Chs. III.-IV. Mal., Bk. III. Ch. I.; Bk. IX. Ch. II.; Bk. XIV. Ch. II. Cf. Guinevere. Globe, p. 454.

“ For I was first of all the kings who drew
The knighthood-errant of this realm and all
The realms together under me, their Head,
In that fair Order of my Table Round,
A glorious company, the flower of men,
To serve as model for the mighty world,
And be the fair beginning of a time,” etc.

Cf. also, *Merlin and Vivien*, Globe, p. 379.

“ It was the time when first the question rose
About the founding of a Table Round,
That was to be, for love of God and men
And noble deeds, the flower of all the world.”

Lines 40-44. Compare ll. 696-700.

Line 46. “The cup.” The cup, Matt. 26: 27. “And he took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it.”

Lines 49-50. “After the day of darkness, when the dead went wandering o'er Moriah.” “And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.” — Matt. 27: 52-53.

Moriah was the name of the hill on which the Temple of Jerusalem was built.

Line 51. “Arimathæan Joseph.” “When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathæa, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple. He went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus.” — Matt. 27: 57-58. For the story of Joseph of Arimathæa and the cup of the Last Supper, see Introduction, I. 1, B.

Cf. “Yet true it is, that long before that day
Hither came Joseph of Arimathy,
Who brought with him the holy grayle, they say,
And preacht the truth; but since it greatly did decay.”
— Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, II. X. 53.

Cf. *Balin and Balan*, where Pellam

“ finds himself descended from the Saint
Arimathæan Joseph ; him who first
Brought the great faith to Britain over seas.”

—Globe, p. 364.

Line 52. Glastonbury is a town in Somersetshire. In the year of our Lord 63, twelve disciples of St. Philip were sent into Britain to convert the heathen inhabitants. The chief of the band was Joseph of Arimathæa. The heathen king Arviragus rejected the mission, but allowed the missionaries to retire to an island in the midst of marshes, the present site of Glastonbury. Here they built and dedicated to the Virgin Mary “a chapel (*capellam*), whose walls below were formed round about with twisted or wattled rods. The twelve dwelt in this spot, dying off one after another, until the place became a solitude and a resort of wild beasts.” A century later the church was discovered by two missionaries sent by Pope Eleutherius, and a little monastery was then founded, which existed when St. Patrick visited the place three hundred years afterward. St. Patrick himself, after his mission to Ireland, lived many years at Glastonbury and there died, A.D. 472. The ancient church (*vetusta ecclesia*, as it is called in the chronicles) was held in great veneration. It is said that St. Paulinus, Archbishop of York (A.D. 625-644), “clothed the old church with boards, and covered it with lead from the top to the bottom.” Abbreviated from *Architectural History of Glastonbury Abbey*, 1866, R. Willis.

The “Holy Thorn,” which was said to blossom at Christmas, was believed to have grown from the staff of Joseph of Arimathæa.

Glastonbury Abbey is one of the most beautiful ruins in England. It is rich in legend, and dear to all lovers of Arthurian story. Here Queen Guinevere was laid beside King Arthur, and Sir Lancelot offered masses for her soul, and swooned for sorrow when she was “put in the earth.” Here are said to lie the bones of many saints, bishops, and martyrs ; but it is history, not legend, that Glastonbury is the one Christian church in England which was not destroyed by the Saxons nor the Danes, but has had an unbroken existence since the conversion of the Britons. References : Dugdale's *Monasticon Anglicanum*, 1655. Skeat's *Joseph of Arimathie*, E. E. Text. Sc., 1871. Introduction, pp. xxiii-xxiv. Mal. Som., Vol. II. p. 166, footnote. Brooke, *English Literature from the Beginning to the Norman Conquest*, Ch. I. pp. 14-16.

Line 61. "Arviragus." See preceding note.

Line 70. Sir Perceval's sister does not, I think, appear in that part of *Le Conte del Graal* (Bib., A. 1) which is written by Chrestien de Troyes, nor in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* (Bib., A. 6). In a later part of *Le Conte del Graal*, probably written by Gautier de Douzens, Perceval is told by his sister of his mother's death. Nutt, p. 16. Potvin IV. ll. 25745-25944. Something like the same incident occurs in the Didot *Perceval* (Bib., A. 3). Nutt, p. 30. Hucher, Vol. I. pp. 446, 447. In the *Queste* (Bib., A. 4) the story of Perceval's sister is very much the same as that in the *Morte Darthur*. Newell, Vol. II. pp. 188-190. Mal., Bk. II. Ch. XIV.; Bk. XVII. Chs. II. VII. XI. XIII., etc.

In the French prose romance *Perceval le Gallois* (Bib., A. 7), Perceval's sister is called Dindrane, and she plays a large part in the story. See *The High History of the Holy Grail*, S. Evans, *passim*.

"Percivale's sister is admirably drawn. All the main characteristics of the mystic female saint, like Catherine of Siena, are embodied in her; and the picture is made by scattered touches given with apparent lightness through the story. She was no cold-hearted maid. The type of which she is the image has a passionate temperament." — Brooke, p. 324.

Cf. "And the house midway hanging, see
That saw Saint Catherine bodily,
Felt on its floors her sweet feet move,
And the live light of fiery love
Burn from her beautiful, strange face.
* * * * *
Clothed with calm love and clear desire,
She went forth in her soul's attire,
A missive fire."

— Swinburne, *Siena*.

For studies of the maiden saint, compare also Tennyson's *St. Agnes' Eve*, Globe, p. 107, and Crashaw's *Ode to Saint Theresa*.

Lines 103-105. Note the repetition of words and phrases. This repetition is characteristic of Tennyson, and often gives a beautiful effect. Cf. *Enoch Arden*:—

"The blaze upon the waters to the east;
The blaze upon the island overhead;
The blaze upon the waters to the west."

— Globe, p. 131.

The Marriage of Geraint:—

“ Forgetful of his promise to the King,
 Forgetful of the falcon and the hunt,
 Forgetful of the tilt and tournament,
 Forgetful of his glory and his name,
 Forgetful of his principedom and his cares.”

—Globe, p. 335.

Lines 116–123. Cf. l. 680, note.

Line 135. “Galahad.” Cf. Introduction I. 1, C, above. “It seems to be generally agreed that the name and activity of Galahad must be considered as an invention of the author of the romance, *La Queste del Saint Graal*, who chose to substitute this hero for Perceval as a character better suited for his religious theme.”—Newell, Vol. II. p. 261. In most of the old romances Galahad is the son of Lancelot, as in the *Grand Saint Graal*, where the author, after giving his parentage, goes on to describe his deeds and his character: “This Galahad of whom I speak to you, shall achieve and accomplish the siege perilous of the round table of King Arthur that Merlin will establish in honor of the table of Joseph, and the void place at the table of the *San Graal* he shall fill, and he shall bring to an end all the perilous adventures of the kingdom of Logris and of the other countries which belong to the Grail, he and Perceval the son of King Pélinor and Bors the Chaste, who shall be son of King Bors the brother of King Ban of Benoye. This Galahad shall be virgin in heart and in thoughts, and so good a knight that his peer cannot be found before nor after. He shall have knighthood, and shall be like a lion and (yet) he shall have a heart pitiful, and a manner simple and meek as that of a bashful maiden.”—Hucher, III. pp. 354–355.

By the thirteenth century, Lancelot had become the greatest hero of Arthurian romance; and the author of the *Queste*, though he needs a purer knight for his story, connects the new hero with him who is known as the bravest and gentlest of Arthur's fellowship. Concerning the growth of this tradition of the birth of Galahad, Mr. Newell says: “The whole composition (*Le Grand Saint Graal*) seems intended to pave the way for the advent of a new Grail-hero, who shall be a son of Lancelot of the Lake, as well as a scion of the race of Joseph of Arimathæa.”—*Jour. Am. Folk-Lore*, No. 40.

The name Galahad is thought to be derived from Numbers 26: 29, and other passages, where the name, which in the English versions is Gilead, is in the Latin Vulgate, Galaad. Newell, above, Heinzel, R., *Über die Französischen Gralromane*. Cf. l. 144, note, below.

Line 135. "Galahad in white armour." The mediæval Grail-hero wore red. In Chrestien's poem, and in Wolfram's, Perceval wins his first armor from a red knight, and this red armor is often mentioned. In Wolfram's poem (Bk. VI. ll. 1581-1582, Weston), Parzival's harness is said to shine "white as the day"; but in Bk. VII. Parzival appears again clad all in red (l. 1373).

In the *Queste*, when Galahad entered the great hall and was unarmed, he "remained in a coat of red sendal, and a red mantle lined with ermine cast over his shoulders." — Newell, Vol. II. p. 150. Cf. Mal., Bk. XIII. Ch. IV. In Malory, Galahad is "a young knight . . . in red arms," Bk. XIII. Ch. III. Both the *Queste* and the *Morte Darthur* tell how Galahad received the red-cross shield. Cf. Introduction, VI. above. Cf. l. 680, note, below.

Lines 136-137.

"God make thee good as thou art beautiful,"
Said Arthur when he dubb'd him knight."

In the *Queste* and in the *Morte Darthur* it is Lancelot, not Arthur, who makes Galahad knight. "Lancelot gave him the accolade, praying that God might make him worthy, for beauty had he sufficient." — *Queste*, Newell, Vol. II. p. 155. "That night Sir Lancelot had passing good cheer; and on the morn at the hour of prime, at Galahad's desire, he made him knight and said, God, make him a good man, for of beauty faileth you not as any man that liveth." — Mal., Bk. XIII. Ch. I.

Lines 143-148. "A son of Lancelot." Cf. l. 135, note. Tennyson rejects for his spiritual hero the sinful parentage which the old romances had given him. This change is as much loss as gain in spiritual symbolism, for the old stories would seem to say that the life of holiness can keep Galahad pure even if he be born of the sin-stained Lancelot. The author of the *Grand Saint Graal* says, "Our Lord did not consider the sinful birth of Galahad, but his good life and good purpose." — Hucher, Vol. III. p. 296. Cf. l. 3, note, above.

Line 145. "By enchantment." Cf. Mal., Bk. XIII. Ch. IV.

Line 140. "But she, the wan sweet maiden, shore away," etc. "Fair sir, said Percivale's sister, dismay you not, for by the leave of God I shall let make a girdle to the sword, such one as shall long thereto. And then she opened a box, and took out girdles which were seemly wrought with golden threads, and upon that were set full precious stones, and a rich buckle of gold. Lo, lords, said she, here is a girdle that ought to be set about the sword. And wit ye well the greatest

part of this girdle was made of my hair, which I loved well while that I was a woman of the world. But as soon as I wist that this adventure was ordained me I clipped off my hair, and made this girdle in the name of God. . . . And then she girt him about the middle with the sword. Now reck I not though I die, for now I hold me one of the blessed maidens of the world which hath made the worthiest knight of the world. Damosel, said Galahad, ye have done so much that I shall be your knight all the days of my life." Mal., Bk. XVII. Ch. VII.

Line 172. "The Siege perilous" = perilous seat. No man might safely sit in the vacant chair at the Round Table until the knight should come for whom it had been made. "And Merlyn, that full of stronge arts was, cleped the kynge (Uther, father of Arthur) as they weren sette, and shewed hym the voyde place. And many other it syen, but they ne knewe not the tokeninge, ne why it was voyde. . . . And than the kynge come to Merlyn and seide, But I wolde praye the to telle me, yef thou knowe, who shall fulfille the place that is voyde! And Merlyn ansuerde, Wite thou right well that it shall not be in thy tyme . . . but it shall be in the kynges tyme that shall come after the."—*Merlin*, Ch. IV. pp. 660–661. Cf. Mal., Bk. XI. Ch. I.; Bk. XII. Ch. XIV.; Bk. XIII. Ch. II. "Siege" is from the French *siege*, seat.

Line 178. Merlin was the great magician of King Uther Pendragon, and of his son, King Arthur. He was prophet, counselor, builder of palaces, worker of miracles, maker of armor. The earliest version of the Arthur and Merlin story, says Mr. Sommer, "is undoubtedly Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History*." There is a poem by Robert de Borron dating from the early thirteenth century called *Merlin*. It exists only as fragment of 504 lines. There is a prose version of a slightly later date, and following that two longer prose romances. These are called for convenience the *Vulgate Merlin*, and the *Suite de Merlin*. From the *Suite de Merlin* Sir Thomas Malory translated the *Morte Darthur*, Bk. I. Chs. XIX.–XXVIII. and Bks. II., III., and IV.

There is a fifteenth-century English version of the "Vulgate" *Merlin*, from which I quote more than once as *Merlin*. Cf. G. of M., Bks. VIII.–IX. Mal. above. For the passing of Merlin, see *Merlin*, Ch. XXXIII. pp. 679–681, Tennyson's *Merlin and Vivien*, Globe, p. 373, and Swinburne's *Tristram of Lyonesse*, VI. pp. 108–110.

The *Suite de Merlin* has been edited by G. Paris and J. Ulrich, 1886, and the "Vulgate" *Merlin* by Mr. Sommer (*R. de Mer*).

Spenser in the *Faerie Queene*, Bk. III. Canto III., describes a great cave "amongst the woody hilles of Dynevowre," where, he tells his

reader, may still be heard the imprisoned servants of the magician at their labor underground.

“ Standing high aloft low lay thine eare,
 And there such ghastly noyse of yron chaines
 And brazen Caudrons thou shalt rombling heare,
 Which thousand sprights with long enduring paines
 Doe tosse, that it will stonn thy feeble braines ;
 And oftentimes great grones, and grievous stownds,
 When too huge toile and labour them constraines,
 And oftentimes loud strokes and ringing sowndes
 From under that deepe Rock most horribly rebowndes.

The cause, some say, is this : A litle whyle
 Before that Merlin dyde, he did intend
 A brazen wall in compas to compyle
 About Cairmardin, and did it commend
 Unto these Sprights to bring to perfect end :
 During which work the Lady of the Lake,
 Whom long he lov'd, for him in hast did send ;
 Who, thereby forst his workemen to forsake,
 Them bownd till his retourne their labour not to slake

In the meane time, through that false Ladies traine
 He was surprised, and buried under beare,
 Ne ever to his worke returned againe :
 Nath'lesse those feends may not their work forbear,
 So greatly his commandement they feare,
 But there do toyle and traveile day and night,
 Untill that brazen wall they up doe reare ;
 For Merlin had in magick more insight
 Than ever him before, or after, living wight.”

Cf. also l. 3, note, above. Stanzas VIII.-XI.

Lines 175-176. “Merlin sat in his own chair, and so was lost.”
 I know of no such legend in the old romances.

Line 178. “Merlin's doom.” Merlin's prophecy concerning the
 Siege perilous.

Line 179. “If I lose myself, I save myself.” This is the brief
 expression of Galahad's whole purpose. He is to deny himself earthly
 love and earthly joy, and to seek only the vision of holier things.
 “For whosoever would save his life shall lose it ; but whosoever shall
 lose his life for my sake the same shall save it.” — Luke 9 : 24.

Lines 179-202. The vow of the knights is thus told in the French *Queste*, Malory's source:—

“After the king had returned from the monastery, he bade the tables be set, and the companions seated themselves each in his own place. After they had put themselves at their ease, they heard a crash of thunder so loud and strange that they thought the walls would have crumbled; presently shone the sun, a hundred times brighter than before, and the knights stared at each other, for they wist not whence came that brightness; for a long time they sat still, eyeing each other like dumb beasts. With that, by the main door, appeared the Holy Grail, covered with a white napkin, entering in such wise that no bearer could be perceived; as soon as it entered, the hall was filled with odours, as if had been scattered all the spices of the world. The Grail went about the palace from wall to wall; as it passed, the tables were laden with such fare as each heart desired. When all the knights had been served, the Grail took leave so suddenly that none knew in what manner it had gone; they who had lost their speech now recovered their voice, and returned thanks to our Lord for the blessing he had bestowed, in that he had honored them so much as to feed them with the grace of the Holy Grail. Of all who were present gladdest was King Arthur, that God had granted him such honor as never before had been shown to any sovereign prince.

“So long as the meal lasted, the knights rejoiced, and spake of the favour they had received; but herein they were disappointed that without covering they had not seen the Holy Grail; wherefore Sir Gawain cried: ‘This vow I make, that to-morrow, without further delay, I will enter on a quest, in such manner that I will devote a year and a day if need be; nor, whatever befall, will I return to court until I have viewed the Grail more openly than it hath hitherto been visible, if in any wise I may come to behold it; and if that be impossible, then will I return.’ When the other knights heard, they rose and made the same pledge; and they declared that they would not cease to seek until they should be seated at the worthy table, where every day was provided food as sweet. King Arthur was troubled and cried to Sir Gawain: ‘Ha, Gawain, thou hast betrayed me! This day hast thou deprived me of the most loyal company that ever I have found; when they separate, I know again they may not be united, but many will perish in this quest that will continue longer than they deem. With all my might have I kept them, and I love them as brethren or sons; I may see no means whereby I may be able to endure their loss.’ The king grew pensive, and tears came

into his eyes. 'Ha, sir!' cried Lancelot, 'such an one as yourself ought to cherish good hope. If we die in the quest, it will be more honorable than if we ended elsewhere.' 'Lancelot,' returned the king, 'the great love I entertain for thee causeth me to utter such words; never had any Christian king so many good knights as myself this day, nor when they part shall ever they be gathered at one table, as up to this time they have been.'" — Newell, Vol. II. pp. 165-167. Cf. also Introduction, pp. 30-32, above.

In Hawker's *Quest of the Sangreal*, the knights draw lots for the directions which they shall take. The lots are arrows.

"Sir Lancelot drew the north, that fell domain,
 Where fleshly man must brook the airy fiend. . . .
 The south fell softly to Sir Percival's hand :
 Some shadowy angel breathed a silent sign :
 That so that blameless man, that courteous knight,
 Might mount and mingle with the happy host
 Of God's white army in their native land !
 But hark the greeting ! 'Tristan for the West !'
 Sir Galahad holds the Orient arrow's name :
 His chosen hand unbars the gate of day !
 O ! blessed East ! 'mid visions such as thine,
 'Twere well to grasp the Sangraal, and die."

Cf. Lowell's *The Vision of Sir Launfal*. Part First.

- I. " My golden spurs now bring to me,
 And bring to me my richest mail,
 For to-morrow I go over land and sea
 In search of the Holy Grail ;
 Shall never a bed for me be spread,
 Nor shall a pillow be under my head,
 Till I begin my vow to keep ;
 Here on the rushes will I sleep,
 And perchance there may come a vision true
 Ere day create the world anew.
 * * * * *
- II. " The drawbridge dropped with a surly clang,
 And through the dark arch a charger sprang,
 Bearing Sir Launfal, the maiden knight,
 In his gilded mail, that flamed so bright
 It seemed the dark castle had gathered all
 Those shafts the fierce sun had shot over its wall

In his siege of three hundred summers long,
 And, binding them all in one blazing sheaf,
 Had cast them forth : so, young and strong,
 And lightsome as a locust leaf,
 Sir Launfal flashed forth in his unscarred mail
 To seek in all climes for the Holy Grail."

Lowell's plot is, he tells us, his own (cf. note to *Sir Launfal*, in most editions). The theme of the poem is expressed in Part Second, VI.-VIII., where the leper, whom Sir Launfal feeds, is transfigured and appears like the glorified Son of Man.

VIII. "And the voice that was calmer than silence said,
 'Lo it is I, be not afraid!
 In many climes, without avail,
 Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;
 Behold, it is here — this cup which thou
 Didst fill at the streamlet for me but now;
 * * * * *
 Who gives himself with his alms feeds three, —
 Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me.'

IX. "Sir Launfal awoke as from a swoond :
 'The Grail in my castle here is found!
 Hang my idle armor up on the wall,
 Let it be the spider's banquet hall;
 He must be fenced with stronger mail
 Who would seek and find the Holy Grail.' "

Line 202. "And Gawain sware, and louder than the rest." Cf. App. I.

Line 205. "The King
 Was not in hall."

In the old story the King is present. See l. 179, note, above, and Introduction, p. 31.

Lines 227-231. "For all the dim rich city," etc. "Of course Camelot, for instance, a city of shadowy palaces, is everywhere symbolic of the gradual growth of human beliefs and institutions, and of the spiritual development of man." — Tennyson, *Mem.*, Vol. II. Ch. V. p. 126. Perhaps the most beautiful pictures of this dim Camelot are given in Gareth and Lynette, where the lad, Gareth, can scarce be sure if the city be real or only visionary.

" So when their feet were planted on the plain
 That broaden'd toward the base of Camelot,
 Far off they saw the silver-misty morn
 Rolling her smoke about the Royal mount
 That rose between the forest and the field.
 At times the summit of the city flash'd ;
 At times the spires and turrets halfway down
 Prick'd thro' the mist ; at times the great gate shone
 Only, that open'd on the field below :
 Anon, the whole fair city had disappear'd.
 Then those who went with Gareth were amazed,
 One crying, ' Let us go no further, lord ;
 Here is a city of Enchanters, built
 By fairy Kings ! ' "

When " an ancient man " comes forth from the Gate of the Three Queens, Gareth tells him : —

" These, my men,
 (Your city moved so weirdly in the mist)
 Doubt if the King be King at all, or come
 From Fairyland ; and whether this be built
 By magic, and by fairy Kings and Queens ;
 Or whether there be any city at all,
 Or all a vision. "

The old man answers : —

" For truly as thou sayest, a Fairy King
 And Fairy Queens have built the city, — son ;
 They came from out a sacred mountain cleft
 Toward the sunrise, each with harp in hand,
 And built it to the music of their harps. . . .
 For an ye heard a music, like enow
 They are building still, seeing the city is built
 To music, therefore never built at all,
 And therefore built forever ! "

Then Gareth

" Enter'd with his twain
 Camelot, a city of shadowy palaces
 And stately, rich in emblem and the work
 Of ancient kings who did their days in stone ;

Which Merlin's hand, the Mage at Arthur's Court,
 Knowing all arts, had touch'd, and everywhere
 At Arthur's ordinance, tipt with lessening peak
 And pinnacle, and had made it spire to heaven."

—Globe, pp. 314-316.

In *The Last Tournament* are given hints of the city, sad in the autumn of the year and in the fading glory of Arthur's broken and dishonored fellowship:—

"Camelot in among the faded fields."

"But when the morning of a tournament,
 By these in earnest those in mockery call'd
 The Tournament of the Dead Innocence,
 Brake with a wet wind blowing, Lancelot,
 . . . down a streetway hung with folds of pure
 White samite, and by fountains running wine,
 Where children sat in white with cups of gold,
 Moved to the lists, and there, with slow, sad steps
 Ascending, fill'd his double-dragon'd chair, —"

i.e. Arthur's. Globe, pp. 435-437. Cf. also *The Lady of Shalott*, Globe, p. 27, "Many-towered Camelot," and Swinburne, *Tristram of Lyonesse*, VI. p. 106.

"They sat and communed of things past: what state
 King Arthur, yet unwarred upon by fate,
 Held high in hall at Camelot, like one
 Whose lordly life was as the mounting sun
 That climbs and pauses on the point of noon,
 Sovereign."

Line 250. The names of the twelve great battles in which Arthur defeated the heathen hordes are given by Nennius. "Then it was that the magnanimous Arthur, with all the kings and military force of Britain, fought against the Saxons. And, though there were many more noble than himself, yet he was twelve times chosen their commander, and was as often conqueror. . . . The first battle at the mouth of the river Glen. The second, third, fourth, and fifth on another river, by the Britons called Duglas. The sixth on the river Lussas. The seventh in the wood Celidon. The eighth near Guinnion Castle. The ninth at the city of Leogris which is called Cair Lion. The tenth on the banks of the river Trat Tremroit. The eleventh on the mountain Breguoin, which we call Cat Bregion. The twelfth

on the hill of Badon" (Bath). — Abbreviated from Nennius, Sec. 50, pp. 28–29. Cf. *Lancelot and Elaine*.

“ And Lancelot spoke

And answered him at full, as having been
 With Arthur in the fight which all day long
 Rang by the white mouth of the violent Glem ;
 And in the four loud battles by the shore
 Of Duglas ; that on Bassa ; then the war
 That thundered in and out the gloomy skirts
 Of Celidon the forest ; and again
 By Castle Gurnion, where the glorious king
 Had on his cuirass worn our Lady's Head,
 Carved of one emerald center'd in a sun
 Of silver rays that lighten'd as he breathed ;
 And at Caerleon had he helped his lord,
 When the strong neighings of the wild White Horse
 Set every gilded parapet shuddering ;
 And up in Agned-Cathregonion too,
 And down the waste sand-shores of Trath Treroit,
 Where many a heathen fell ; ‘ And on the mount
 Of Badon, I myself beheld the king
 Charge at the head of all his Table Round.’ ”

— Globe, p. 392.

Line 253. “The brand Excalibur.” Arthur's sword, made in the island of Avallon, is mentioned by Geoffrey of Monmouth. “Then girding on his Caliburn, which was an excellent sword made in the Isle of Avallon, he graced his right hand with his lance, named Ron, which was hard, broad, and fit for slaughter, Arthur rushed into the hordes of the enemy. . . .

“Arthur, provoked to see the little advantage he had yet gained and that victory still continued in suspense, drew out his Caliburn, and calling upon the name of the blessed Virgin rushed forward with great fury into the thickest of the enemy's ranks . . . neither did he give over the fury of the assault until he had, with his Caliburn alone, killed four hundred and seventy men.” — G. of M., Bk. IX. Ch. IV. This is at the siege of Badon, Bath.

Cf. also Lay., ll. 21137–39. “Caliburn, his sword, he hung by his side ; it was wrought in Avalon with magic craft,” etc.

The sign that Arthur is chosen to be King is that he draws this sword from a great stone into which it is fixed. Mal., Bk. I. Chs. III.–V. *Merlin*, Ch. VI. p. 98.

Line 256. Edition of 1869, "O then, perchance, when all our wars are done."

Line 257. "The brand Excalibur will be cast away." Cf. Mal., Bk. XXI. Ch. V. Tennyson, *Morte d'Arthur*, Globe, p. 67. *The Passing of Arthur*, Globe, p. 458. In Tennyson's *The Coming of Arthur*, the Lady of the Lake gives Arthur

"his huge cross-belted sword
Whereby to drive the heathen out.
* * * * *

There likewise I beheld Excalibur
Before him at his crowning borne, the sword
That rose from out the bosom of the lake,
And Arthur row'd across and took it — rich
With jewels, elfin Urim on the hilt,
Bewildering heart and eye — the blade so bright
That men are blinded by it — on one side
Graven in the oldest tongue of all this world,
'Take me,' but turn the blade and ye shall see,
And written in the speech ye speak yourself,
'Cast me away !'¹"

— Globe, pp. 307-308.

Line 263. "The golden dragon." The dragon was Arthur's royal emblem, as it had been that of his father Uther, whose title Pendragon meant, the old stories say, Dragon's head. G. of M., Bk. VIII. Chs. XIV.-XVII.

Le Roman de Merlin, Sommer's ed., Ch. III. In this romance of Merlin Uter has a brother named Pendragon. The two brothers are about to fight a host of Saxons. Merlin says to Pendragon, "When it is day, you will see a red dragon in the air, moving between heaven and earth, and when you shall have seen the emblem of your name, you may fight confidently, for your men shall have the victory." Pendragon is slain in this battle, and Uter takes the name of Uter-pendragon. Merlin makes Arthur a dragon banner to be his ensign.

"And Merlin made to Kynge Arthur a baner where-in was grete signification, for ther-in was a dragon, which he made sette on a spere, and be semblance he cast oute of his mouth fire and flame. And he had a great taile and a longe. This dragon no man cowde wite where Merlin it hadde, and it was merveilouse light and mevable; and whan it was set on a launce thei beheilde it for grete merveile." — *Merlin*, Ch. VII.

In the Old French the dragon is made of brass, and its tail is *tor-tice*, twisted.

Cf. also Lay., *Brut*, ll. 18227-18230. "Ever since they called Uther, who for a standard bare the dragon: . . . Uther Pendragon, Pendragon in British, Dragon's-head in English."

In Tennyson's *Idylls* the dragon emblem is frequently mentioned.

"Easily to be known,
Since to his crown the golden dragon clung,
And down his robe the dragon writhed in gold,
And from the carven work behind him crept
Two dragons gilded, sloping down to make
Arms for his chair, while all the rest of them
Thro' knots and folds and loops innumerable
Fled ever thro' the woodwork."

— *Lancelot and Elaine*, Globe, p. 395.

"The Dragon of the great Pendragonship
That crowned the state pavilion of the King."

— *Guinevere*, Globe, p. 453.

"But she saw
The dragon of the great Pendragonship
Blaze, making all the night a stream of fire."

— *Ibid.*, p. 456.

Line 287. Matt. 11: 7. "Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see?"

Line 290. "But I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail." In Malory, no knight sees the Holy Grail. Cf. note, ll. 179-202. Cf. App. II.

Line 298. Edition of 1869, "But *you* that follow but the leader's bell."

Line 300. "Taliessin." An ancient Welsh bard. See Henry Morley, *English Writers*, Vol. I. pp. 210-214. Taliessin was supposed to have lived in the eighth century. Cf. l. 3, note, above.

Line 302. "Lancelot is Lancelot." Lancelot is always, in Malory, the best knight in battle. It is honor enough to any other to be second to Lancelot in a combat. But when Galahad comes and draws his sword from the stone, the preëminence of Lancelot is ended. "Therewith the king and all espied where came riding down the river a lady on a white palfrey toward them. Then she saluted the king and the queen, and asked if that Sir Launcelot was there. And then he answered himself: I am here, *faïr lady*. Then she said, all

with weeping: How your great doing is changed sith this day in the morn. Damosel, why say you so? said Launcelot. I say you sooth, said the damosel, for ye were this day the best knight of the world; but who should say so now, he should be a liar, for there is now one better than ye, and well it is proved by the adventure of the sword, where to ye durst not set to your hand. . . . As touching unto that, said Launcelot, I know well I was never the best. Yes, said the damosel, that were ye, and are yet, of any sinful man of the world." — Mal., Bk. XIII. Ch. V. The leadership of the Round Table has passed from Lancelot to Galahad.

Line 311. Cf. l. 250, note.

Line 312. "The strong White Horse." That is, the power of the heathen Saxons. "Tacitus tells us that the Germans kept sacred white horses, at the public expense, in the groves and woods of the gods, and that from their neighings and snortings auguries were taken. Amongst the people of the northern marshlands, the white horse seems to have been held in especial honour, and to this day a white horse rampant forms the cognizance of Hanover and Brunswick. The English settlers brought this, their national emblem, with them to Britain, and cut its figure on the chalk downs as they advanced westward, to mark the progress of their conquest. The white horses on the Berkshire and Wiltshire hills still bear witness to their settlement. A white horse is even now the symbol of Kent." — Grant Allen, *Anglo-Saxon Britain*, pp. 27–28.

Many students will remember the references to the vale of the White Horse in *Tom Brown's School Days at Rugby*, Ch. I. Cf. *Guinevere*: —

"The Lords of the White Horse,
Heathen, the brood of Hengist left."

— Globe, p. 456.

Cf. *Lancelot and Elaine*, l. 250, note, above.

"His (Hengist's) Weapon or Arms being a leaping white Horse, or *Hengst*, in a red Field." — Richard Verstigan, *Restitution of Decayed Intelligence in Antiquities*. London, 1673, p. 131.

Cf. Bulwer-Lytton, *King Arthur*. Bk. I. Stanza LIV.

"I saw — I saw my dragon standard there, —
Thronged there the Briton; there the Saxon wheel'd;
I saw it vanish from that nether air —
I saw it trampled on that noiseless field; —
On pour'd the Saxon hosts — we fled — we fled!
And the Pale Horse rose ghastly o'er the dead.'"

Line 318. In edition of 1869, "*The chance of noble deeds will come and go.*"

Line 319. In edition of 1869, "*Unchallenged while you follow wandering fires.*"

Line 322. "let us meet
 . . . once more in the full field."

In Malory, before the coming of the Holy Grail into the hall, it is known that Galahad will achieve the quest, and the king has said to him, "Sir, ye be welcome, for ye shall move many good knights to the quest of the Sangreal, and ye shall achieve that never knight might bring to an end." Bk. XIII. Ch. IV. The tournament also takes place before the supper in the hall. "Now, said the king, I am sure at this quest of the Sangreal shall all ye of the Table Round depart, and never shall I see you again whole together; therefore I will see you all whole together in the meadow of Camelot to joust and to tourney, that after your death men may speak of it that such good knights were wholly together such a day. As unto that counsel and at the king's request they accorded all, and took on their harness that longed unto jousting. But all this moving of the king was for this intent, for to see Galahad proved. . . . Then Sir Galahad, by the prayer of the king and the queen, did upon him a noble jesseraunce (cuirass), and also he did on his helm, but shield would he take none for no prayer of the king. . . . Then Sir Galahad dressed him in middes of the meadow, and began to break spears marvellously that all men had wonder of him; for he there surmounted all other knights, for within a while he had defouled (trodden down) many good knights of the Table Round save twain, that was Sir Launcelot and Sir Percivale." — Mal., Bk. XIII. Ch. VI.

Line 325. Edition of 1869, "*Before you leave him for this quest.*"

Line 350. "On wyvern, lion, dragon, griffin, swan." These are the projecting carvings. The "necks of dragons," in line 346, were, of course, carved corbels supporting the "lady-laden" balconies. The upper stories of the houses projected over the street, and age had made them lean more and more, so that the folk who bent from roofs and balconies "met foreheads all along the street."

Line 352. In the edition of 1869, "Calling, 'God speed!' but in the street below."

Lines 350-360. "And then they put on their helms and departed, and recommended them all wholly unto the Queen; and there was weeping and great sorrow. *Then the Queen departed into her chamber so that no man should apperceive her great sorrows.* When Sir

Launcelot missed the Queen, he went unto her chamber, and when she saw him she cried aloud : O, Sir Launcelot, ye have betrayed me and put me to death for to leave thus, my lord. Ah, madam, said Sir Launcelot, I pray you be not displeased, for I shall come as soon as I may with my worship. Alas ! said she, that ever I saw you ; but he that suffered death upon the cross for all mankind be to you good conduct and safety, and all the whole fellowship. Right so departed Sir Launcelot, and found his fellowship that abode his coming. And so they mounted upon their horses and rode through the streets of Camelot ; and there was weeping of the rich and poor, and the King turned away and might not speak for weeping." — Mal., Bk. XIII. Ch. VIII.

Line 355. In edition of 1869, "For sorrow, and in the middle street the queen."

Line 358. "The Gate of the three Queens." Cf. *Gareth and Lynette*, Globe, p. 315 :—

"And there was no gate like it under heaven,
 For barefoot on the keystone, which was lined
 And rippled like an ever-fleeting wave,
 The Lady of the Lake stood : all her dress
 Wept from her sides as water flowing away ;
 But like the cross her great and goodly arms
 Stretch'd under all the cornice and upheld :
 And drops of water fell from either hand ;
 And down from one a sword was hung, from one
 A censer, either worn with wind and storm ;
 And o'er her breast floated the sacred fish ;
 And in the space to left of her, and right,
 Were Arthur's wars in weird devices done,
 New things and old so-twisted, as if Time
 Were nothing, so inveterately, that men
 Were giddy gazing there ; and over all
 High on the top were those three Queens, the friends
 Of Arthur who should help him at his need."

Lines 361-457. Percivale's story. Compare Mal., Bk. XIV. Chs. III.-X. See Introduction, VI. Different as is Tennyson's poem from the broken old tale of Malory's *Frenche Booke*, both agree in making the obstacle to Percivale's quest his lack of humility, of self-surrender.

Lines 370-378. "Percivale starts full of joy in his own bravery, but, as he goes, Arthur's warning that his knights in this quest are following wandering fires occurs to him, and he drops down into

despair. Then he sees a series of visions. A burning thirst consumes him ; it is the symbol of the thirst for union with God." — Brooke, p. 333.

Lines 389–390. . . . "It is the symbol of the thirsty soul trying to find in the beauty of nature its true home, and failing." — Brooke, p. 333.

Lines 391–400. "It is the symbol of the soul trying to find rest in domestic love, and failing." — Brooke, p. 334.

Lines 401–420. "It is the symbol of the soul seeking to be satisfied with the glory of the earth, chiefly to be attained in war." — Brooke, p. 334. "This is the glory of *wealth*, before which the world prostrates itself." — G. B. Macaulay, *Holy Grail*.

Lines 421–450. "It is the symbol of the soul seeking to slake its thirst by popular applause, and especially in the fame of a ruler of men, but all is thirst and desolation as before ; and then he finds the valley of humility, and of forgetfulness of his sins in the glory of God's love. It is a rich invention, and perfectly wrought." — Brooke, p. 334.

Line 420. In edition of 1869, "And *wearied* in a land of sand and thorns."

Line 421. In edition of 1869, "And *on I rode*, and found a mighty hill."

Line 427. "*Clomb*." Cf. *Princess*.

"but oft

Clomb to the roofs."

— Globe, p. 205.

Line 433. In edition of 1869. "That so cried upon me ? and he had." This is probably a misprint.

Line 455. "Thou thoughtest," etc. If Percivale had "lost himself, like Galahad," even his sins would have been forgotten in his desire for the Grail.

Line 458. "In silver armour Galahad." Cf. l. 135, note.

Lines 452–453.

"and like a flying star

Led on the gray-hair'd wisdom," etc.

Matt. 2:1–9. "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, of Judæa, in the days of Herod the King, behold, there came *wise men* from the east to Jerusalem, . . . and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them till it came and stood over where the young child was."

Line 456. Cf. l. 179, note.

Lines 466–467. "The fiery face as of a child." "And then he took

an unblee (wafer), which was made in likeness of bread. And at the lifting up there came a figure in likeness of a child, and the visage was as red and as bright as any fire, and smote himself into the bread," etc. — Mal., Bk. XVII. Ch. XX.

Line 483. "Far in the *spiritual city*." This expression may have been suggested to Tennyson by the frequent mention in the old romances of the Spiritual Palace in the city of Sarras. In the *Grand Saint Graal* it is called "*li palais esperiteus*." — Hucher, II. p. 128. Cf. Newell, II. p. 197. Mal. Bk. XVII. Chs. XI. XXI. XXII.

Line 489. In edition of 1869, "*Then rose a hill*," etc.

Lines 518–519.

"And had he set the sail, or had the boat
Become a living creature clad with wings?"

These beautiful lines recall the greater passage in the *Purgatorio* of Dante, where the poet sees the boat with its angelic pilot approaching over the mystic sea: ". . . Appeared to me . . . a light along the sea coming so swiftly that no flight equals its motion. . . . Again I saw it brighter become and larger. Then on each side of it appeared to me a something, I know not what, white, and beneath, little by little, another came forth from it. My Master still said not a word, until the first white things showed themselves wings; then, when he clearly recognized the pilot, he cried out, 'Mind, mind thou bend thy knees. Lo! the Angel of God: fold thy hands.' . . . See how he scorns human means, so that he wills not oar, or other sail than his own wings between such distant shores." — Norton's *Dante*, Pur. II.

Lines 526–530. Compare the celestial city in *Paradise Lost*, Bk. II. ll. 1047–1050: —

"Far off the empyreal heaven, extended wide
In circuit, undetermined square or round,
With opal towers and battlements adorn'd
Of living sapphire."

Line 532. "Which never eyes on earth again shall see." Compare the death of Galahad, in the *Queste*: "At the end of the year, on the day of Galahad's coronation, he and his comrade rose early, and proceeded to the Spiritual Palace. As they gazed at the holy vessel, they beheld a man like a bishop, surrounded by angels, who celebrated mass; when he came to the Elevation of the Host, he called Galahad, and said: 'Servant of Christ, advance, for now shall thou behold what so long thou hast desired to see.' While Galahad looked, he trembled; and, as his mortal flesh began to perceive the spiritual

things, he prayed that while he was in that joy, he might be allowed to enter the celestial life. The bishop took the Host, and offered it to Galahad, telling him that he was Josephes, son of Joseph, a virgin like himself. At these words, Galahad kissed Perceval and Bors, bidding the latter in his name salute Lancelot his father; with that, he knelt at the table, and presently fell forward, while angels received his soul. The two comrades saw descend a hand that carried upward the vessel and the lance; and from that day was no man so bold as to affirm that he had looked on the *Holy Grail*." — Newell, Vol. II. p. 197. Cf. also Mal., Bk. XVII. Ch. XXII.

Lines 540–563. "This great and lofty vision . . . is made all the more vivid, and its unfitness for the common toil of goodness on this earth is shown, by the contrast which Tennyson immediately makes to it in the daily life of the poor monk Ambrosius, who knows naught of marvels, but is the providence of the little village near which he lives; who does not understand these unearthly visions, but who pities the men who, having known the sweetness of love, surrender it for dreams. . . : The delightful description . . . of the work of this small, comfortable, and comforting village priest shows not only how Tennyson liked this type, but also marks the range of a poet who could, as it were, in one breath, write the sublime passing of Galahad and, immediately after, this homely, loving sketch of a small monk's life in a small world." — Brooke, pp. 327–328.

Line 574. In edition of 1869, "*Whither I made,*" etc.

Line 633. "The Pelican on the casque of good Sir Bors." Cf. Mal., Bk. XVI. Ch. VI., where Sir Bors sees a bird that pierces its own breast and feeds its young with its life-blood. "The pelican as crest is no doubt meant as a symbol of the unselfish devotion to his kinsman which characterizes him." — G. B. Macaulay, *Holy Grail*. Mr. Macaulay also calls attention to the fact that Bors loses himself in his love and care for Lancelot, and therefore sees the Grail.

Line 646. "His former madness." — Mal., Bk. XI. Ch. IX.; Bk. XII. Ch. IV. Lancelot's madness is healed by the Holy Grail. See also l. 648, note.

Line 648. "For Lancelot's kith and kin so worship him." In edition of 1869, "For Lancelot's kith and kin *adore him so.*" Cf. Mal., Bk. XI. Ch. IX., where Sir Bors says of Sir Lancelot, who has become mad because of Queen Guinevere's anger: "Alas, that ever Sir Launcelot's kin saw you, for now have ye lost the best knight of our blood, and he that was all our leader and our succour; and I dare say and make it good that all kings, Christian nor heathen, may not find such a knight, for to speak of his nobleness and courtesy, with

his beauty and his gentleness. Alas, said Sir Bors, what shall we do that be of his blood? Alas, said Sir Ector de Maris. Alas, said Lionel." Cf. in *Lancelot and Elaine*, the tournament in which Lancelot, in disguise, overthrows all the knights, and his "kith and kin" are jealous of the stranger: —

" A fury seized them all
A fiery family passion for the name
Of Lancelot — "

— Globe, p. 395.

Line 661. "Paynim amid their circles." "Paynim" is here used as an adjective for pagan, but properly Paynim should mean 'heathen lands,' from Old French *paienisme*, Low Latin *paganismus*. — G. B. Macaulay, *Holy Grail*. The "circles" are the Druid temples. The greatest remnant from these ancient heathen temples is the circle of Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain.

Line 680. Cf. l. 135 and note, above. Tennyson makes his spiritual hero wear white, the symbol of purity and separateness from the world, but he does not discard the mediæval symbolism of the color red. Rose-red and flame, in Christian symbolism, signified the glory and the burning of love and zeal; and Tennyson makes these the colors in which the spiritual revelation, the vision of the Grail, is given. Nowhere is Tennyson's use of symbolic color more beautiful than in these various appearances of the Grail. To Percivale's sister the Holy Cup comes down a long beam of light, and shows rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive. To Bors, the rosy glow is like that of a taper through the fingers of a hand. To Galahad's eager vision, it burns like the fiery face of a child, and it moves before him, blood-red, over marsh, mountain, and mere. Percivale beholds it above the head of the transfigured Galahad, redder than any rose. Lancelot, whose heart yet treasures its deadly sin, sees the Grail through glare, as of a seven-times-heated furnace, sees it covered with crimson samite, and knows that the quest is not for him. Cf. the use of white and red in Dante's *Paradiso*. Of the angelic host the poet writes, "Their faces were all of living flame, and their wings of gold; and the rest so white that no snow reaches that extreme." — *Par.*, Canto XXXI., Norton's translation. Cf. in Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the seraph band: —

"Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came."

Line 681. "The seven clear stars of Arthur's Table Round." The name Arthur meant the Bear, Arcturus, and was connected with the

constellation of the Great Bear. "The circle which this constellation describes around the polar star denoted the Round Table."—Little-dale, *Essays on Lord Tennyson's Idylls of the King*, p. 29. Cf. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, ed. 1844, p. 633; Wolmer, *Wörterbuch der Mythologie*, ed. 1836, p. 326. Cf. *The Last Tournament*:—

"the knights,
Glorying in each new glory, set his name
High on all hills and in the signs of heaven."

—Globe, p. 440.

Lines 696-700. Cf. ll. 40-44.

Lines 718-721. Cf. Mal., Bk. XVII. Ch. XXIII.; Bk. XVIII. Ch. I.

Lines 759-760. "Like him of Cana." John 2: 1-10. ". . . Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine: and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now."

Line 810. "*Carbonek*." In the *Grand Saint Graal* (Bib., A. 5) Corbenic is the beautiful and strong castle which Alain le Gros builds in the Terre Foraine for the safe-keeping of the Grail. "And they brought the holy vessel and placed it in a high chamber in the palace." The writer says that the name is Arabic and means holy vessel. Hucher, III. p. 289. Cf. Mal., Bk. XIV. Ch. II. "Ryde streight unto the castel of Carbonek where the maymed kyng is there lyenge." Also Bk. XVII. Chs. I. XVI. XIX.

Lines 774-849. "Lancelot's story." Cf. Introduction, VI., above. "And the wind arose and drove Launcelot more than a month through-out the sea, where he slept but little, but prayed to God that he might see some tidings of the Sangreal. So it befell on a night, at midnight, he arrived afore a castle on the back side, which was rich and fair, and there was a postern opened toward the sea, and was open without any keeping, save two lions kept the entry; and the moon shone clear. Anon Sir Launcelot heard a voice that said, Launcelot, go out of this ship and enter into the castle, where thou shalt see a great part of thy desire. Then he ran to his arms and so armed him, and so went to the gate and saw the lions. Then set he hand to his sword and drew it. Then there came a dwarf suddenly, and smote him on the arm so sore that the sword fell out of his hand. Then heard he a voice say: O man of evil faith and poor belief, wherefore trowest thou more on thy harness than on thy Maker, for He might more avail thee than thine armour, in whose service that thou art set. Then said Launcelot, Fair Father, Jesus Christ, I thank Thee of Thy great mercy that Thou reprovest me of my misdeed; now see I well that ye hold me for your

servant. Then took he again his sword and put it up in his sheath, and made a cross in his forehead, and came to the lions, and they made semblaunt to do him harm. Notwithstanding he passed by them without hurt, and entered into the castle to the chief fortress, and there were they all at rest. Then Launcelot entered in so armed, but he found no gate nor door but it was open. And at the last he found a chamber whereof the door was shut, and he set his hand thereto to have opened it, but he might not. Then he enforced him mickle to undo the door. Then he listened and heard a voice which sang so sweetly that it seemed none earthly thing; and he thought the voice said joy and honour be to the Father of Heaven. Then Launcelot kneeled down to fore the chamber, for well wist he that there was the Sangreal within that chamber. Then said he: Fair, sweet Father, Jesus Christ, if ever I did thing that pleased Thee, Lord, for Thy pity never have me not in despite for my sins done aforetime, and that *Thou show me something of that I seek*. And with that he saw the chamber door open, and there came out a great clearness, that the house was as bright as all the torches of the world had been there. . . . Then looked he up in the middes of the chamber, and saw a table of silver, and the Holy Vessel, covered with red samite, and many angels about it, whereof one held a candle of wax burning, and the other held a cross and the ornaments of an altar. . . . Right so entered he into the chamber, and came to the table of silver; and when he came nigh he felt a breath, that him thought it was intermeddled with fire, which smote him so sore in the visage that him thought it brent his visage; and therewith he fell to the earth, and had no power to arise." Sir Launcelot lies as one dead for four and twenty days; when he becomes conscious he asks where he is: "Then said they all that he was in the Castle of Carbonek. . . . Sir, said they, the quest of the Sangreal is achieved now right in you, that never shall ye see of the Sangreal no more than ye have seen."—Mal., Bk. VII. Chs. XIV.—XVI.

Line 916. "So spake the king: I knew not all he meant."

"The vision comes to each according to the soul of each. . . . But however the vision came or did not come, the pursuit of it, as Tennyson thought, was the ruin of noble association for just government, the contradiction and not the realization of true religion. It breaks up the Round Table. The kingdom is left without its defenders, and when the remnant return they are exhausted. Their failure to reach ideal goodness has made them reckless, and drives them into base materialism. That which was left of truth and purity in the court lessens day by day. . . . But where, then, Tennyson asks, is spirit-

uality to be found, where pure holiness, and love which beholds the invisible kingdom? It is to be found where Arthur found it, in the midst of human life, in honest love of men, in doing our duty where God has placed us. Arthur, who represents this view of Tennyson, has, he says, his own visions. He has more. He sees God, not as a vision, but face to face. He does not wander on the quest of the Holy Grail, but He whose sacrifice of love the Holy Grail embodied is always with him. So says the King, and Percivale, less spiritual in his ascetic solitude than Arthur, does not 'know all he meant.' — Brooke, pp. 328-330. Cf. also Introduction, p. 34, for Tennyson's own comments on this passage.

"He (Tennyson) pointed out the difference between the five visions of the Grail as seen by the Holy Nun, Sir Galahad, Sir Percivale, Sir Lancelot, Sir Bors, according to their different, their own peculiar natures and circumstances, and the perfection or imperfection of their christianity. He dwelt on the mystical treatment of every part of his subject, and said that the key is to be found in a careful reading of Sir Percivale's vision and subsequent fall and nineteenth-century temptations." — *Mem.*, Vol. II. Ch. III. p. 63.

"Browning came in, and returned with me and Knowles to dinner, where again I read the *Grail*, and Browning said it was my 'best and highest.'" — Tennyson, November, 1868, *Mem.*, Vol. II. Ch. II. p. 59.

APPENDIX I. SIR GAWAIN.¹

"And Gawain sware, and louder than the rest."

— *Holy Grail*, l. 202.

The changes which Tennyson makes in the material of the old romances are often easy to understand, and many times they are not only justifiable, but admirable — the addition of new beauty to old beauty. But Tennyson's presentation of the character and position of Sir Gawain seems to me to be without reason and without excuse. It is not, however, entirely without antecedent, for the Gawain of the later mediæval romances differs from the Gawain of the earlier ones.

"In the earliest Arthurian romances, Gawain, the nephew of King Arthur, stands nearest to the King, and is his favor-

¹ Cf. Weston, Jessie L., *The Legend of Sir Gawain*.

ite. Mr. Rhys tells us that in Welsh romance Gawain is never vanquished in battle until the day of his death."¹

In nearly every romance of the Arthurian cycle, Gawain has a prominent part. "In all these (poems and prose romances) Gawain appears as the *beau ideal* of courage and courtesy. . . . But in the later stage of the Arthur saga . . . the character of Gawain undergoes a remarkable and striking change; he becomes a mere libertine, cruel and treacherous. Even his valour is no longer unquestioned."²

Gawain is second only to Perceval in both Chrestien's poem and Wolfram's, and those poems and the prose *Perceval le Gallois* give half the narrative to Gawain's adventures.

When the quest of the Grail becomes the dominant subject of the romances, when Galahad succeeds Perceval as chief hero, and when many knights take part in the adventure, Gawain becomes degraded in importance and in character. Tennyson follows Malory in so far as he uses the old story in *The Holy Grail*, and if, as is sometimes stated, the Gawain of Malory were altogether unworthy, one could understand the character as presented by Tennyson. But Malory's book, being made up from many, is often inconsistent,³ and nowhere more so than in those passages which relate to King Arthur's great nephew. One cannot but wish that the great nineteenth-century poet had done justice to the great knight of chivalry, whose tomb, so says the most ancient legend, recorded that Arthur's nephew was "not unworthy of Arthur."⁴

It is interesting to notice a few of the epithets and phrases applied to Gawain in the old romances. In Chrestien's poem, *Eric and Enide*, Arthur "prayed Eric to return as soon as he might, for in all his court was no worthier cavalier, save only *Gawain*, his dear nephew, with whom none could compare."⁵ In *Perceval le Gallois*, Gawain speaks "like the most courteous in the world" (l. 9544).

¹ Rhys, *The Arthurian Legend*, pp. 13, 14.

² Weston, Ch. II. p. 8.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8. Gawain is first mentioned by William of Malmesbury (1125). Cf. Paris, *Hist. Litt. de la France*, Vol. XXX. p. 29. Madden, *Syr Gawayne*, p. xxiv.

⁵ Newell, Vol. I. p. 40. *Eric und Enide*, Foerster's ed., 1890, Lines 2284-2289, p. 84.

Chrestien's Gawain is courteous and bold. Perhaps Wolfram's Gawain best illustrates the "patient and resourceful courtesy" which Mr. Nutt says is Gawain's "characteristic in mediæval romance."—Nutt, p. 241.

When Parzival, brooding over his absent love, reminded of her red and white beauty by the blood-drops on the snow, falls into a dream and forgets to defend himself, it is Gawain who understands the love trance, and even its cause, so that he covers the stained snow with a cloth of silk and sendal. When Parzival learns that he is speaking with Gawain, he says, "Thou hast this honour won, that all men thou treatest gently."¹

In the Welsh *Peredur ab Ebrauc*, Kay taunts Gwalchmai (Gawain) with his over-gentleness: "Thus hast thou gained the advantage over many. And while thy speech and thy soft words last, a coat of thin linen were armour sufficient for thee." Arthur approves Gawain, and Peredur (Percival), when he hears his name, says: "I am right glad to meet with thee, for in every country where I have been, I have heard of thy fame for prowess and uprightness."²

In Geoffrey of Monmouth we read of "Walgan (Gawain), whose valour was never to be foiled."³ In Layamon's *Brut*, "Walwain was full noble-minded; in each virtue he was good; he was liberal, and knight with the best."⁴ In the English *Sir Perceval*, Gawain has the familiar traits:—

"Bot thanne ansuerde Syr Gawayne,
Faire and curtaisely agayne."⁵

"Gawayne that was meke and mylde,
And softe of ansuere."⁶

In the fourteenth-century English poem, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Gawain bears a pentagle on his shield: "It was well suiting to this knight and to his arms, since

¹ *Parzival*, Bk. VI. ll. 724-725.

² Lady Guest's *Mabinogion*, Vol. I. pp. 327, 329.

³ Bk. X. Ch. X.

⁴ Lines 2355-57.

⁵ Lines 285-286.

⁶ Lines 291-292. Cf. Hallowell, J. O., *The Thornton Romances*. Cf. Swinburne, *Tristram of Lyonesse*, I. p. 32.

"And gracious Gawain, scattering words as flowers,"

Gawain was faithful in five and five-fold, for pure was he as gold, void of all villainy, and endowed with all virtues. Therefore he bare the pentagle on shield and surcoat as truest of heroes and gentlest of knights."¹

When Gawain came to a strange castle and told his name, the lord of the castle "laughed aloud for gladness, and all men in that keep were joyful that they should be in the company of him to whom belonged all fame and valour and courtesy, and whose honour was praised above that of all men on earth. Each said softly to his fellow, 'Now shall we see courteous bearing, and the manner of speech befitting courts. What charm lieth in gentle speech shall we learn without asking, since here we have welcomed the fine father of courtesy.'"²

In Malory's *Morte Darthur*, the character of Sir Gawain is less noble than in Chrestien's or Wolfram's, until we come to the story of the last days, a story that is unsurpassed in its presentation of knightly gentleness and generosity. In the *Morte Darthur* we are told that Sir Gawain "revenged the death of his father the tenth year after he was made knight."

Bk. II.
Chs. X.-
XIII.

The young Gawain asks that he may be made knight on the day that King Arthur shall wed Guinevere. "I will do it with a good will," said King Arthur, "and do unto you all the worship that I may, for I must by reason, ye are my nephew, my sister's son."

Bk. III.
Ch. II.

The first adventure of Gawain results in his dishonor, for he is unmerciful to a fallen foe, and slays a fair lady by mischance. "And there, by ordinance of the queen, there was set a quest of ladies on Sir Gawaine, and they judged him for ever while he lived to be with all ladies, and to fight for their quarrels; and that ever he should be courteous, and never to refuse mercy to him that asketh mercy."

Bk. III.
Chs. V.-
VIII.

Gawain is called by King Pellinore "as good a knight of his time (*i.e.* of his age) as any in this land."

Bk. IV.
Ch. IV.

One of Gawain's strong traits is his devotion to his kinsfolk. It is this in the end that brings the rupture between him and Lancelot. Early in Gawain's story, when Sir Uwayne is banished from court "Sir Gawaine made him ready to go

¹ *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, translated by J. Weston, p. 24.

² *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, p. 34.

with him ; and said, ' Whoso banisheth my cousin-german shall banish me.' "

Gawain's love turns sometimes quickly to hatred when he is angered: "for he was vengeable, and when he hated he would be avenged with murder."

Bk. IV.
Ch. XVI.

Bk. VII.
Ch.
XXXIV.

Malory's Gawain then is good or bad, according to the story which Malory chances to be translating. He comes to be the best-beloved comrade of Lancelot, but he never has the better when Sir Lancelot is in the field.

Bk.
XVIII.
Ch. X.

When the knights take the vow to seek the Holy Grail, it is Gawain who swears first, and King Arthur reproaches him that he has thus broken the fair fellowship of the Table Round.

Cf. *Introd.*,
p. 31.

In his quest Sir Gawain comes to an abbey, and is shriven by a hermit, who reproaches him for his sinful life and bids him do penance. "Nay, said Sir Gawaine, I may do no penance; for we knights adventurous oft suffer

Bk. XIII.
Ch. XVII.

great woe and pain." The quest of the Holy Grail is not for Sir Gawain. His hands are too deeply stained with murder, and his heart is too full of earthly love. When he is "nigh weary of the quest of the Sangreal," he dreams a

Bk. XVI.
Ch. I-IV.

marvelous dream which a hermit expounds to him, telling him that such knights as "took upon them to go in the quest of the Sangreal without confession" may not succeed. "Knights of poor faith and of wicked belief, these three things failed,—charity, abstinence, and truth,—therefore ye may not attain that high adventure of the Sangreal."

Ch. IV.

At length when Sir Gawain has been overthrown in a tournament by Sir Galahad, and badly wounded, Sir Ector says to him, "Meseemeth your quest is done. And yours is not done, said Gawaine, but mine is done. I shall seek no further."

Bk. XVII.
Ch. I.

At length when Sir Gawain has been overthrown in a tournament by Sir Galahad, and badly wounded, Sir Ector says to him, "Meseemeth your quest is done. And yours is not done, said Gawaine, but mine is done. I shall seek no further."

The Gawain of Malory's earlier books is the later and worse type of the legendary hero, but the Gawain of the last books is "Gawaine the courteous," the magnanimous and devoted friend of Lancelot and of the King. When Gawain is dying, he writes a letter to Lancelot, with whom he has had a bitter quarrel, begging the great knight to return to King Arthur and save him from the traitor Mordred. "When Sir Arthur wist that Sir Gawaine was laid so low, he went unto him; and there the King made sorrow out of measure, and took Sir Gawain in his arms, and

thrice he there swooned. And then when he awaked, he said : Alas, Sir Gawaine, my sister's son, here now thou liest ; the man in the world that I loved most ; and now is my joy gone, for now, my nephew, Sir Gawaine, I will discover me unto your person. In Sir Launcelot and you I most had my joy and mine affianche, and now have I lost my joy of you both ; wherefore all mine earthly joy is gone from me. — Mine uncle, King Arthur, said Sir Gawaine, wit you well my death-day is come, and all is through mine own hastiness and wilfulness, for I am smitten upon the old wound the which Sir Launcelot gave me, on the which I feel well I must die ; and had Sir Launcelot been with you as he was, this unhappy war had never begun ; and of all this am I causer, for Sir Launcelot and his blood through their prowess held all your cankered enemies in subjection and daunger. And now, said Sir Gawaine, ye shall miss Sir Launcelot. But alas, I would not accord with him. . . .

“ Then when paper and ink was brought, then Gawaine was set up weakly by King Arthur, for he was shriven a little tofore ; and then he wrote thus, as the French book maketh mention : Unto Sir Launcelot, flower of all noble knights that ever I heard of or saw by my day, I, Sir Gawaine, . . . send thee greeting, and let thee have knowledge that the tenth day of May I was smitten upon the old wound that thou gavest me afore the city of Benwick, and through the same wound that thou gavest me I am come to my death-day. And I will that all the world wit that I, Sir Gawaine, knight of the Table Round, sought my death, and not through thy deserving, but it was mine own seeking. Wherefore I beseech thee, Sir Launcelot, to return again unto this realm, and see my tomb, and pray some prayer more or less for my soul, . . . for of a more nobler man might I not be slain. Also, Sir Launcelot, for all the love that ever was betwixt us, make no tarrying, but come over the sea in all haste, that thou mayst with thy noble knights rescue that noble king that made thee knight, that is, my Lord Arthur ; for he is full straitly bestead with a false traitor.” — Mal., Bk. XXI. Ch. II.

This passionate but generous and loyal Gawain is changed by Tennyson to a mere boaster and hypocrite.

In *Elaine* we read : —

. . . " then from where he sat,
 At Arthur's right, with smiling face arose,
 With smiling face and frowning heart, a Prince,
 In the mid night and flourish of his May,
 Gawain, surnamed The Courteous, fair and strong ;
 And after Lancelot, Tristram, and Geraint,
 And Gareth, a good knight, but therewithal
 Sir Modred's brother and the child of Lot,
 Nor often loyal to his word ; and now,
 Wroth that the king's command to sally forth
 In quest of whom he knew not, made him leave
 The banquet, and concourse of knights and kings."
 . . . " his wonted courtesy,
 Courtesy with a touch of traitor in it."

— Globe, p. 398.

In *Pelleas and Ettarre*, Gawain is represented as "light-of-love," untrue of his word, and false in knightly friendship.

In *The Passing of Arthur*, the King, sleeping before the battle, hears the voice of Gawain warning him of the fate that awaits the morrow's conflict. The King wakes and cries, "Thine, Gawain, was the voice!" But Sir Bedivere bids him not heed the omen, for —

"Light was Gawain in life, and light in death
 Is Gawain, for the ghost is as the man."

— Globe, p. 459.

This is an entire change from Malory's story. Bk. XXI.
 Ch. III.

In the oldest legends of Gawain, he is given a peculiar trait — that his strength waxes between morning and noon, and wanes as the day declines.¹ "But Sir Gawayne fro it passed 9 of the clok, waxed ever stronger and stronger, fro thenne whan it was past noone, and whan it drew toward evensong, Syre Gawayne's strength febeld and waxt passynge faint, that unnethe he might dure ony lenger."² The old fable may be taken as a figure, for, as the strength of Galahad waxes, that of Gawain declines, until, at the hands of the nineteenth-century poet, he suffers worse than

¹ Weston, *Sir Gawain*, pp. 12-13. Potvin, Vol. III. p. 334, ll. 19139-19146. *R. de Mer.*, Ch. XII. p. 137.

² Mal. Som., Bk. IV. Ch. XVIII.

death, for it seems a kind of crime to take away from even a legendary hero the glory that shone about his name through dim and far-away centuries.¹

APPENDIX II.

Line 290. "In the romance, to *see* the Graal is tantamount to the achievement of the Quest; for . . . not even Galahad is allowed to *see* the Graal until the Quest is virtually at an end. . . . If Galahad had *seen* the Holy Grail, there was no longer any need of a vow, for to him, the Quest was achieved. Tennyson, not recognizing the fact that to *see* the Holy Vessel is equivalent to the *achievement of the adventure*, has transferred to his pages the very words of the vow as they stand in the romance, viz., 'to follow till they see,' and then has added this exclamation of Galahad,

" ' But I, Sir Arthur, *saw* the Holy Grail,'

as a fanciful touch of his own, thus stultifying the whole story." — Gurteen, *The Arthurian Epic*, pp. 258-259.

Only baptized eyes can see the Grail. In *Parzival*, Feirefiz, the heathen half-brother of Parzival, does not see it, even in the hall of Monsalvat, until he has received baptism. — *Parzival*, Bk. XVI. ll. 690-707, 797-802, 950-953.

APPENDIX III.

"Whatever may, at the outset, have been the origin of the Grail legend and the tales of Arthur and his knights, so much is certain, the romances, as we possess them in the

¹Chaucer's "Squire" describes a strange knight who came before the court: —

" With so heigh reverence and obeisaunce,
That Gawayn with his oldè curteisye,
Though he were comen ageyn out of fairye,
Ne koude hym not amende with a worde."

— *The Squire's Tale*, ll. 89-91.

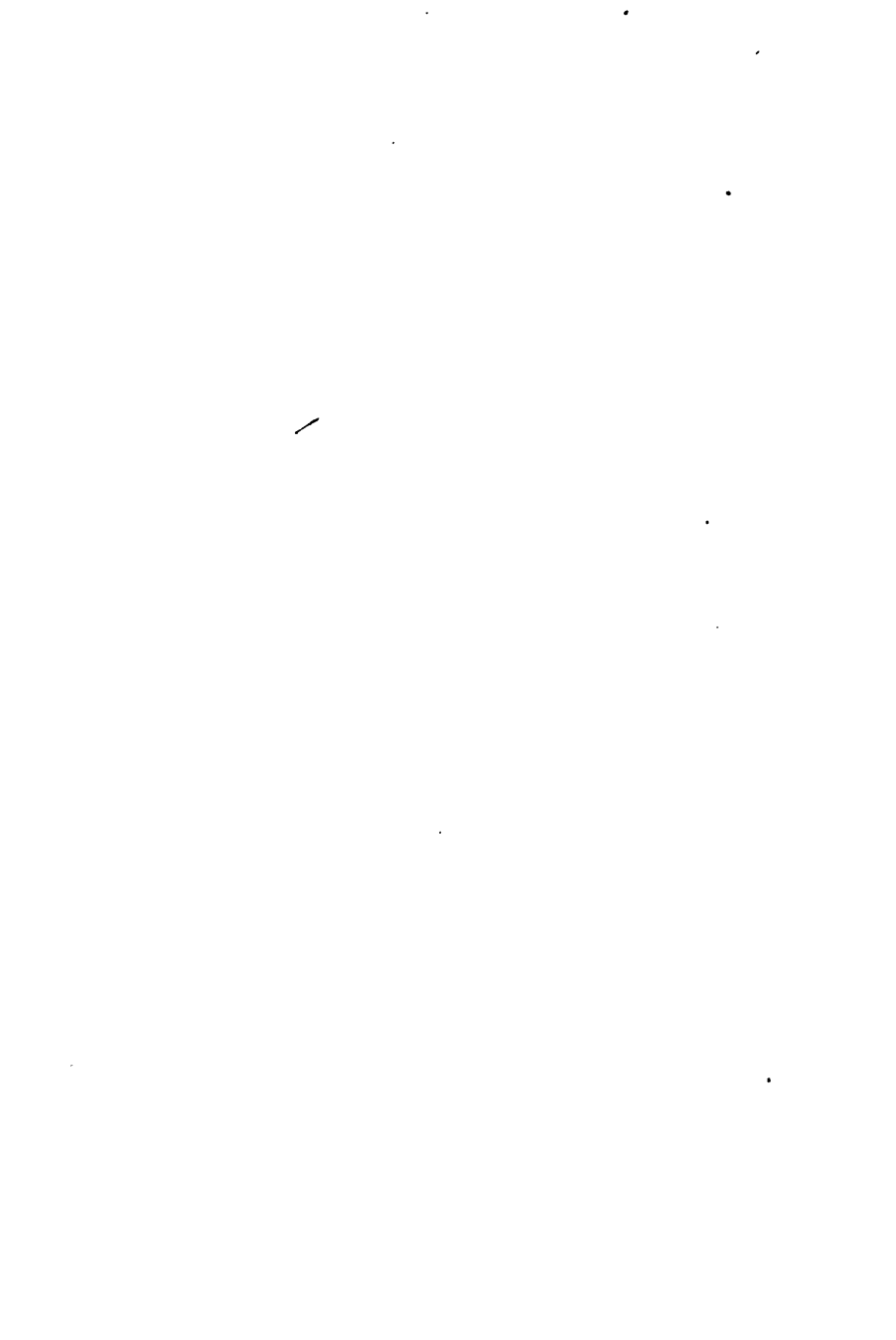
Cf. Swinburne, *The Tale of Balen*, I. p. 14.

" — Gawain, sweet of soul and gay
As April ere he dreams of May."

Mss. of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, came into existence in the north of France, toward the latter half of the twelfth century. The romance writers collected, in all probability, the metrical accounts, or lays, recited by wandering minstrels, welded them together into a more or less harmonious whole, and retold them in prose. These romancers, too, united for the first time the worldly adventures of the knights of the Round Table with the spiritual story of the Holy Grail, yielding in that to the tendencies of the age." — H. Oskar Sommer, *Le Roman de Merlin*, pp. 7-8.

M. Gaston Paris, who speaks, perhaps, with greater authority than any other student of Arthurian romance, gives the date of Chrestien's *Perceval* as about 1180. *Hist. Litt. de la France*, Tome 30, p. 23.

Miss Jessie Weston says in the introduction to her translation of Wolfram's *Parzival*: "Wolfram's greatest work, the *Parzival*, was apparently written within the early years of the thirteenth century; he makes constant allusions to events happening, and to works produced, within the first decade of that period; and as his latest work, the *Willehalm*, left unfinished, mentions as recent the death of the Landgrave Herman of Thuringia, which occurred in 1216, the probability seems to be that the *Parzival* was written within the first fifteen years of the thirteenth century." pp. ix-x.



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